PUBLISHED BY

Constable & Company Limited
London W.C. 2

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BOMBAY
CALCUTTA MADRAS

Oxford University
Press

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TORONTO

The Macmillan Company
of Canada, Limited



ASAFIA

STRESEMANN

By

ANTONINA VALLENTIN

With a Foreword by

PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN

and a portrait

Translated by

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1594

15824

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CHECKED

LONDON

CONSTABLE & CO LTD

1931

Acc. No.	15824
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	1779

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW

STRESEMANN'S MISSION

BY

PROFESSOR ALBERT EINSTEIN

If we are still to credit the saying of the Greek sage that no man may be esteemed happy before his death, we may now count Stresemann a happy man. For it was given to him to live successfully in the service of a great idea, and so to die—an idea, in the fulfilment of which the more progressive spirits of our generation can no longer doubt.

For the fulfilment of his great mission he was most happily equipped. His was a strong character, hardened by a laborious struggle for existence in his youth, which his comparatively humble origin made inevitable. An atmosphere of struggle and conflict was natural and indeed necessary to him, even when his constitution had been undermined by illness. But nature had endowed him likewise with a fine sense of the beauties of speech and literature that lent a more delicate quality to his gift of eloquence. Indeed, his oratory, sustained as it was by his consciousness of his exalted task and a certain wholesome optimism, cast a spell which it was difficult to withstand. Therewith came a capacity of grasping unfamiliar ways of thought and spheres of feeling, that is very seldom met with in our public servants.

His greatest achievement is, to my mind, his ability to induce a number of large political groups, against their own political instincts, to give their support to a comprehensive campaign of European reconciliation. His success in this matter depends on a none too

obvious psychological phenomenon. The men who possessed insight and courage enough to withstand the war psychosis, to tell their countrymen the truth, and confront them with the evil consequences of a war, especially one so intensified and so prolonged, were, not merely during the war but even after it and until the present day, regarded with distrust and even hatred. On the other hand, those who from thoughtlessness, weakness, or even criminal purpose, shared the guilty responsibility for the outbreak of the great war, are utterly excused. No one throws a stone at Berchtold, but Förster and Mühlon are objects of hatred.

During the war Stresemann had been warlike enough to be able, later on, to hold the confidence of those whom he wanted to win over to his own wise and noble purposes. He had to contend against the resentment of men defeated in war, injured in their pride, and robbed of their accustomed privileges; and, unlike his comrade-in-arms Briand, he was not backed by a victorious and exultant nation-in-arms.

Stresemann had one characteristic that is always found in great leaders. He did not exert his influence as the representative of a caste, a profession, or a nation, nor indeed as a type of any kind, but directly as a man of mind and the bearer of an idea. He was as different from politicians of the usual stamp as a genius differs from an expert. Herein lay the magic and the strength of his personality.

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I

THE ROMANTIC. BERTRAN DE BORN

In the cemetery dedicated to those who fell in March 1848, which lies like a silent isle of recollection in the tumultuous ocean of the great city of Berlin, the fiftieth anniversary of that hapless revolution was being celebrated. The police were hurriedly summoned to disperse the pack of ruffians who, by honouring an act of revolt, were protesting against the existing order. But as the representatives of the power of the State forced their way into the cemetery in the pale March sunlight, they stopped abashed before a group of students in bright caps with scarves of their club colours across their chests, who gathered round their leader. This was a pallid youth with reddish hair standing up stiffly from a fine broad forehead, bright blue eyes, and a fair though faint moustache under a prominent nose, which protruded challengingly from the thin boyish face. He watched the advance of the police with the proud composure of youth prepared for martyrdom, as he clutched the wreath with its broad black, red and gold ribbon.

In Imperial Germany the respect for anyone connected with a University was so great, that even these worthy guardians of public opinion withdrew after administering a sharp reprimand, and Gustav Stresemann and his friends were left in possession of the field.

But the youth who had involved his friends in a demonstration so unusual in that society, was not himself a revolutionary. This unexpected gesture was born of literary reminiscence; it was hardly a considered act of political protest. The social atmosphere from which he came was neither so saturated with good living, nor so austere, as to arouse him against the existing order or stir him to proletarian revolt.

Gustav Stresemann often quoted Napoleon's dictum: "I am certain that the middle ranks of life are much happier than the so-called upper classes." As the youngest son of a publican in the Köpenickerstrasse he was destined for an academic career which seemed to that excellent citizen, his father, who had raised himself to a position of some prosperity, the highest ideal, the very symbol of social advancement.

On the one hand he was lonely and little considered by his companions and masters, so that he was able to devote himself entirely to his studies, and live in the dream-world that his books conjured up in his mind; on the other, he was possessed by such affection and admiration for his mother that his loneliness was not too great a burden on his sensitive youth. He was not on easy terms with his father, who was absorbed in his business and in making provision for his family, and was accustomed to atone for occasional harshness to his son, whom he regarded with secret pride, by lavish gifts of pocket-money for books and amusements. The difference in age separated him from his brothers and sisters; and their relations were made still more difficult by their slight envy of his attainments, and more especially by the mother's prefer-

ence for her youngest son, as the result of which, in large families, the favourite is condemned with childish cruelty to jealous isolation.

But the mother's understanding of the boy, born of her passionate affection for him, the unquestioning admiration with which she listened to all the exuberant thoughts and plans of youth, together with his aloofness from the rest of his family, confirmed in him the feeling that he was somehow different—set apart for some special destiny.

The boy, silent and full of secret pride, whose real self was concealed behind a paralysing shyness, grew up almost without knowledge of pleasure: he created his own world, and a lovelier world than this, out of his own emotional responsiveness to the past. He found his spiritual home in romance, in the wild legends of Uhland, in the melancholy of Lenau, in all the fragrant dreams that carried him out of the world of every day. When the alert-eyed youth began to understand the epoch in which he lived—a world that was spiritually asleep, politically exhausted, self-distrustful, sunk in an official conservatism, he grew more and more absorbed in days gone by.

"The world was falling into a period of Philistinism," he said much later, at a time when youthful recollections are commonly transfigured in a golden glow, though he was only aware of the bitterness of his first impressions; "The inner life was asleep. . . . And this blight that lay upon the impulse of development originated in the German university life. . . ."

This flight into the past, imposed on him by the political atrophy and spiritual impotence of his age, was undisturbed by all the signs of new life that

appeared above the horizon at the turn of the century. The world of pure romance which Gustav Stresemann had made his own, accorded so well with the essence of his being, that it survived all the shattering experiences that the youth of that age had to endure. Moreover, in Imperial Germany the isolation of the social strata was such that the new movements originating with the spiritual *élite* made no impression on the impervious barriers that immured the great middle class.

The turn of the century brought with it tremendous doubts, the crisis of faith which positivism had unloosed, the *fin-de-siècle* atmosphere that bestowed a morbid art upon a world sick with congestion and satiety; naturalism rose above the horizon and shook life out of its false security. Another and utterly different antidote to the insipidity of the time appeared in the shape of æstheticism, a silent lonely island with its classic temple of Form and Stephan George as high priest, aloof from all the spiritual commonplace of the time. But none of these currents touched the circle in which Gustav Stresemann's spiritual development was fulfilled.

Even the mighty rebel, in whose titanic shadow lived not merely the youth of Germany but the whole world, that embodiment of revolt that bore the name of Nietzsche, did not strike like a kindling flash into the solitude in which his life was passed.

Dawn was unmistakably at hand—but Gustav Stresemann's being was rooted in a much simpler and more optimistic past. He had never tried to shake the pillars of the universe, never tried to transvaluate all values nor doubted all that exists, and never struggled with his God in silent torment.

Not all the storms of that age of transition could shake the tolerant moderate religious feeling, which remained, to the end of his life, the same confession of faith that he wrote at seventeen in his *curriculum vitae*: "I believe in Jesus Christ as God's son, in so far as he is the purest and truest embodiment of the divine nature. His words and teachings seem to me the clearest and noblest manifestation of the divine will, and I therefore look upon them as the foundation of Christianity." In this world of a somewhat prosaic and depleted Protestantism there was no room for mystic exuberance, or any ultimate self-effacement before transcendent power. His faith was strongly enough fortified by reason to be able to hold out against the assaults of our modern life, and to constitute a permanent refuge in hours of despair and hours of grateful emotion.

. . . .

When Gustav Stresemann took part in the London Conference as Minister for Foreign Affairs, the fact that he went to church on Sunday caused surprise. There were not wanting malicious persons who said that he was anxious not to be beaten in the competition for the favour of Heaven by Marx, who went to Mass every day; others saw in this gesture an astute attempt to win the approval of the pious English. In point of fact he regarded this church-going, which with Stresemann was a solemn and considered act, as in the nature of a ceremonial visit to a great Sovereign.

This Lutheran outlook originated in the days of the *Kulturkampf* and was by no means innocent of a feeling of repulsion for the black Fathers, and of mistrust of the Machiavellian Jesuits. This mistrust

accompanied him all his life and broke out in the most unexpected places, and indeed revealed itself in the oddest reactions and antipathies which could only be explained by this deeply rooted conviction of his youthful days.

. . . .

Gustav Stresemann never outgrew the emotional world of his youth; he never laid it aside like a garment that had grown irksome, never—even at the height of his maturity—disavowed it. This world of his was the traditional conception of German romanticism. It grew more firmly rooted in him during his student years, which he counted among the happiest of his life. When, at the University of Berlin, he joined the advanced Liberal Students' Association called the Neogermania, and later on at Leipzig, where he studied political economy under Bücher, and joined the sister corporation named the Suevia, he developed himself and his vitality, which had lain dormant in his boyhood, by associating with young men of similar origin and interests.

The life of these young men, who carouse all night, argue all the questions of the hour, wander from tavern to tavern with their girl friends singing all the old, old German songs, and yet, in spite of all their restless revelling, work hard for an honest and honourable future, was, in young Gustav Stresemann's eyes, enveloped in glamour; "Yes," he would say, "there is something unique in German student life. It is characteristic; characteristically German, German like our old songs, German like our love of moonlit nights, German like our melancholy. . . . And if the passionate romanticism of German student life

cannot be understood or experienced by any other nation, that should merely make us all the more attached to what is a legacy of our race, and should be held sacred."

No breath of cynicism, no other problem than an occasional mild self-questioning, ever ruffled the assured and confident idealism of his youth. And he preserved this idealism intact through the time when most young men are busy "living their lives to the full," as the phrase went in those days, and exploring the depths of existence, a process that always leaves behind a touch of irony and bitterness.

From the grosser joys of student life he was preserved by his modest and reserved sensitiveness, his innate loathing of anything coarse or crude, and his instinctive respect for women, which the memory of his beloved mother had implanted in him. He was in no sense a wet blanket, he laughed gladly and loudly, enjoyed a joke and was in every sense a jovial companion; but he recoiled from any cynical conception of sexual relations, or any frivolous play with deeper feelings—indeed an unguarded remark could make him actually blush.

This boyish modesty never left him all his life. Fundamentally he remained a puritan. There were people who completely destroyed themselves in his eyes by some cynical remark. A pretty woman with a rather free attitude to life, lost his friendship by giving him a somewhat crude and unadorned account of her love experiences. An acquaintance with an older lady that had given him much pleasure, was suddenly broken because he could not forgive her for having, with the tolerant morality of the eighteenth

century—he had then been Foreign Minister for two years—given him a pornographic book to read. He was himself a little ashamed of his own modesty, which was so unsuited to a period of lax social morals, and he was, for that reason, especially angry with anyone who thus embarrassed him. He preserved an extraordinary ignorance of the perverted emotions that lend a glitter to Berlin life. All abnormal relations between men and women were to him a book with seven seals, and his friends used often to say jokingly that the wickedness of the world had to be explained to him, so bewildered was he by much that others accepted with at most a shrug of the shoulders. The idealism of his youth that led him to make categorical moral demands on humanity did not collapse under stress of an age that had abandoned all restraint.

The strength of his romantic idealism lay in his marked and characteristic optimism. Gustav Stresemann came into the world as an optimist just as others are born poets or painters. He believed just as naturally as he breathed; his affirmation of life, his faith in life, beat in the very rhythm of his blood. His optimism conditioned his whole manner of thought and feeling—even his faculty of sight, as though it were an inborn quality of his eyes, like astigmatism or short-sightedness.

The world presented itself to him as a unique progress, circuitous sometimes, towards the good—he saw the fulfilment where others could scarcely see the sign of a beginning; he saw endless perspectives opening out as soon as there was the slightest glimmer of a prospect; he saw the building towering up to heaven

as soon as the first stone was laid. Soothed by the certainty of achievement, he survived defeat, and survived a succession of disasters. Endowed as he was by nature with a magnificent memory, he was never able to recall defeats and disappointments which, to others, would have meant the end. He lived because he believed—*spero ergo sum.*

He believed in all the ideals of days long since gone by: in freedom, as the word is interpreted by Liberalism, in the ennoblement of humanity, in the idea of progress, in the development of the individual, and in the rhythmic advance to a higher order. The collapse of a world could not shake this youthful faith, for it was renewed by every breath he drew, and held out against his own experience and good sense.

He believed in men—even against his own experience—and in the face of disappointments. It was not possible for him to assume that a man's intentions would be evil. Hamlet's astonishment that "one may smile, and smile, and be a villain," was a degree simpler in his case. That an agreeable frank-eyed friendly person could also be a villain, was to him inconceivable.

It was not until much later, under the influence of those who stood near to him, that he was able to admit that there might be shadows where he had seen nothing but light. His faith in goodness instinctively prevailed over his knowledge of human nature, and his trustfulness over his own better insight.

With this shining faith in men and in existence, Stresemann entered upon life; and therewith he brought faith in himself. When only seventeen he knew that fame was waiting for him somewhere. It

was not indeed the fame of great achievements that he looked for; at that time, in fact, he vaguely contemplated a literary career, possibly as a historian. He did not yet see his way before him; but fame was already his fixed aim.

In those happy student years his confidence in a special destiny grew stronger within him; stronger, too, became his control of his own powers, his quick grasp of facts, and his influence over his fellows, which, once his boyish bashfulness was outgrown, grew more and more observable. The youthful society in which he lived confirmed his romantic attachments and the predominance he owed to his early mastery of expression. Bertran de Born was his "beer-name" in his students' club which elected him "Speaker"—and this designation filled him with a secret pride of which the traces were still noticeable many years later. This nickname expressed a recognition of the fact that he shared with the hero of Uhland's ballad the gift of winning men by words. He had the gift of clothing his thoughts in long and carefully constructed sentences; his clear ringing voice poured forth the resonant rounded words that seemed to leap from the very heart of carefree, diligent, simple-hearted German youth. Never pompous and never trivial, neither abstruse nor hackneyed, no better spokesman could have been found for an aspiring students' association with moderately revolutionary ideas. He had, too, the capacity for argument that struck the weapons out of the adversary's hand; he mercilessly laid bare the weaknesses in the opposing case, so that those less able than himself no longer cared to measure themselves against him. Some-

times a glow would come into his words that shot like a jet of blood into his formal periods, and then he swept his youthful hearers far away from the world of everyday, out of the tedious reality into his own world of romantic fancy.

. . . .

A quarter of a century later, when Gustav Stresemann was already chairman of a turbulent political party, the confidence in the gift he shared with the old troubadour still remained; on one occasion the committee of the People's Party devoted much time to a proposal that no decision should be adopted until twenty-four hours had elapsed after a speech by Stresemann, when the mysterious influence of his persuasiveness had passed away, and the members of the party had recovered their emotional balance.

II

RECONCILEMENT WITH REALITY

But Gustav Stresemann the Romantic was born in Berlin, and not for nothing did he come from the heart of the German middle class. His idealism was based on a firm sense of reality: he was alert and unruffled in his recognition of given facts. His romantic bias did not get him out of touch with life, as often happens in the case of men born under more southerly or easterly skies. His solid German forbears and his acquaintance with the struggle for life left him a legacy of indestructible inner composure, which served to regulate his idealistic emotional adjustment and his almost agonised sensitiveness.

He would often speak of the two personalities within him, whom he called the man of deeds and the man of dreams. In his boyhood his mother used affectionately to call him Traumjörg, a name that later on he proudly adopted as the title of his first volume of poems: "Traumjörg: Poems of Youth." But he was a dreamer, in the eyes of the Köpenickerstrasse, which regarded his efforts to reach another world as an escape from the circle of immediate life-interests. However, when dreams represented a cleavage between reality and appearance, an effacement of the limit between desire and realisation, there was not much of the Peer Gynt in young Stresemann. His dreams took reality as their point of departure and

return. Action was the medium of his self-expression. Even before he left school, he was clear that he had not the capacity for abstract thought. All his perceptions presented themselves in the form of mental images. But not only was he devoid of the power of abstraction, he was also incapable of projecting, so to speak, his emotions, imaginings, conclusions and impressions, into empty space. All his thoughts and writings, everything he said and undertook, was directed to the achievement of a specific effect.

This double individuality would have been fatal in another, and might have produced an inner strife in which a weaker man would have gone down. But he was a man of happily composed contradictions. Almost automatically his inner harmony was restored—a harmony which he proceeded to impress on his picture of the universe.

Even in his external appearance there was this apparent contradiction, which was resolved by a more careful observation of the man. His appearance betrayed little or nothing of the unexpected sensibility that was the real key to his nature—and yet it was, in broader sense, a faithful representation of his unshakeable inner health.

The thickset body with its heavy square shoulders and soldierly straight back, was kept stiff and strong much more by an unconquerable will than by mere muscular force; for even as a young man, Gustav Stresemann—to all appearance, the picture of health, had been attacked by Basedow's disease. But he was always firmly of the opinion that the mind constitutes the body, that illness is a failure of spiritual resistance,

and that a man can master his body by a determination to do so, just as he can succeed in influencing his fellowmen.

As deceptive as his physical robustness was the crude heaviness of his facial expression. The great head, with its dome-shaped skull ending at the back in a fold of fat above the bull-like neck; the protuberant fleshy nose, the broad-lidded rather prominent eyes, light blue in slightly reddened sockets, the parted lips, the round and heavy chin, presented a picture of full-blooded solid sensuousness, of crude and undifferentiated strength. One saw a wall of flesh, at first glance only redeemed by a certain air of cunning from its vassalage to earth. Not a muscle quivered under the broad rosy surfaces, to betray the tumult of sensations that raged behind that mask of power. Only his hands revealed the man—delicate hands, with pointed tapering fingers, restless, small-wristed, the backs of them covered with a reddish down. These vivacious speaking hands, so often clenched to conceal how moved he was, were the only visible sign of his responsiveness to all the sensations that surged into his consciousness. His whole massive body was a single vibrating bundle of nerves—impressions swept over him as the wind stirs the surface of the waters. Trivial causes often unloosed the suddenest changes of feeling. A word, an intonation, a gesture, were often responsible for a headlong change of mood from wild exhilaration to the deepest despair, from absolute faith to the blackest mistrust.

But in the inmost recesses of his being, where decisions and deeds had their origin, his fundamental

sanity restored the balance. A flash of suspicion might lead to an outburst, but as soon as a decision was called for,—a decision that involved his profoundest convictions, he at once recovered his original faith, his ultimate confidence. His nervous reactivity, his sensitiveness, that made him so easy a prey to all impressions, was but "skin-deep," as the English say; it did not reach his inmost being, the clear integrity of his nature was never stirred nor ruffled by these superficial movements. He yielded to an impression with every fibre of his being, with that concentration of attention that Bergson called genius. He gave himself, only to withdraw again the next moment and then give himself again, with that vast restlessness that was perhaps the ultimate secret of his character and influence.

Much that seemed incomprehensible in Stresemann's character and development is to be explained by the genuineness of this momentary surrender to a thought, an idea, or an action. The strange involutions, too, of his passage through life, his quite sudden rise to prominence, were made up of such sudden mental leaps, such moments of fierce inner tension that seized and swung him over the ordered stages of development in a dizzy progress that outstripped his very self, and rid him of the stale forms of what he once had been.

It was, perhaps, a trivial impulse that prevented the youthful graduate from making abortive attempts at the academic career for which he at first seemed destined, and drove him into business and politics; a quite banal cause seems to have aroused in him the ambition to express himself in the world of action. On the threshold of the insensible transition from

youth's slow accumulation of power to the testing time of manhood, he was confronted with a bitter experience that formed the last bridge between dream and reality. This was the essential unhappy love-affair, without which no young man's development can be regarded as finally completed.

He fell in love with a girl, the typical young girl of good family, who bore the name of Lotte, so hallowed by Goethe's *Werther*; and all the dreams of his natural idealism, all the yearnings of his struggling self-consciousness, invested this first love-experience with the significance of the great and only passion of a lifetime. It was for the sake of his young and secret sweetheart he adopted a practical profession. Triumphantly the young doctor informed her that he had secured a modest position as manager in a Dresden firm at a salary of a thousand marks a year, payable quarterly, and on this small but safe foundation they could contemplate setting up house. But the parents had views for their daughter's future that transcended the young doctor's modest prospects. They were not satisfied with so bourgeois an outlook, and the manner of the young man, whose consciousness of power gave him a confidence that was as yet unfounded, seemed too boastful and pretentious; and thus it was that parental good-sense hammered so long against the precarious foundation of youthful ardour, that one day, out of a clear heaven of exalted hope, came the lightning-flash of cool dismissal. There was talk of "mature consideration," of "realisation that they were unsuited to each other"; it was, in fact, no more than a young girl's failure to recognise the man's unique dynamic force, and her preference for com-

monplace security against the promise of a great future.

Disappointed love, trust betrayed, and a good deal of wounded vanity laid youth's blissful confidence away in its coffin. It became Stresemann's purpose to enter upon life as a hard cold fighter. He wanted to prove his strength if only to make her regret him. But hardness and coldness fell from him like an impersonation that is put aside, and all the illusions of indestructible youth blossomed forth victoriously from a first unhappy love.

To begin with, his path led him into a very modest and limited contact with reality. The post of manager in the Union of Saxon Chocolate Manufacturers, which he took up in the year 1901, offered him very narrow scope in a small section of the business world; but it did put him in the position to display, on however small a scale, the abilities that made it possible for him to solve the greater problems that were to confront him later. With that quickness of comprehension that was peculiar to him, that kind of thought-shorthand that so startled his associates in after days, he soon got his bearings in a sphere of activity that was to him quite unfamiliar.

The Saxon chocolate industry was suffering from the persistence of a number of small businesses and a reluctance to combine. Gustav Stresemann, who himself experienced the collapse of a small business like that of his father, wasted no time in idle lamentation over a regrettable development, but sought to guide himself by the conclusion that he drew from this individual case as from many other signs of the times. He felt that the modern world called for the construc-

tion of increasingly large commercial combines, and he used his best effort to convince the obstinately conservative Saxon manufacturers of this fact. To achieve his purpose he employed the same methods which later on enabled him to hold together so divided a party as his own. He attacked each manufacturer personally, tried to make him see his own interest, and laboured at his point with all the tenacity that was always characteristic of him, until they yielded to the young doctor's irresistible gift of persuasion, and surrendered with a sigh the conservative principles of a lifetime. The combination of two local groups was the germ of the Union of Saxon Manufacturers which grew from an unimportant association into a comprehensive commercial combine. Though he was without previous business experience, and had nothing but his energy behind him, in two years he had increased the number of members of the Union of Saxon Manufacturers from a hundred and eighty to a thousand. Two years sufficed to give practical proof of his success.

And yet the young Dresden organiser who had shown such ability in the establishment of the Manufacturers' Union was not possessed of the typical business mentality. Commercial conditions only interested him as the foundations of the political structure, commercial power had no significance for him except as a means to political power. He tried to release commercial life, in the narrow sphere within which he could influence it, from the confinement of private interests. He sought for the new methods which the new age demanded—they must have sounded highly revolutionary to the old gentlemen in the Manufacturers' Union—for, as was revealed later

by an agent of the Union, he was at pains to establish relations with the Press, whose power he fully recognised, to get in touch with members of parliament, and systematically to influence public opinion.

It was he who induced the Union to demand that industry should be represented in the Chamber. His energy in strengthening the Union, his labours in overcoming opposition, in extending its operations, in creating an impression of the importance of such a factor as industry, were aimed far less at increased profits than at the establishment of industry as an element of power in the State. He early recognised the forces that were stirring in the political organism, and he was a strong advocate of a moderate social policy, because he felt the rising wave of Socialism, with its accompanying threat of class war, to be a force that might destroy the State; he who was later to be called the "capitalists' slave" and "Stinnes' young man," pressed for the removal of social anomalies, always, of course, from a concern for the stability of the State. The first German Chancellor of the great coalition, when elected to the City Council, voted for the admission of Socialist members to the committees, and aroused so much indignation thereby as to evoke an outburst of fury from a Conservative journalist who wrote that Stresemann had given his King the same hand with which he had voted for the admission of Social Democratic Councillors. The bridge that he built between commerce and politics brought Stresemann into politics himself. He first joined the National Socialist Party founded by Friedrich Naumann, Hellmuth von Gerlach, Paul Göhre and others, but resigned when it subscribed to the prin-

ciples of free trade. He then passed over to the National Liberals, but there also he found too narrow a scope and too timorous a spirit. At eight-and-twenty years of age he began his lifelong fight with his eternal enemies ; want of initiative, fear of responsibility, and self-distrust.

His first real appearance in the public eye, at the annual assembly of the National Liberal Party at Goslar in 1906, took the form of an attack on the party's smug inactivity. He reproached it with being too dictatorial, of not understanding how to win over the masses, and, more especially, with want of that driving force without which no party can live—the desire of power. He was, indeed, now burning with the passion that was driving him to his appointed end—political ambition.

His was no mere lust for power, for position, honours, or social advancement, and all its accompanying advantages. He was, of course, possessed of ambition and vanity ; without them no politician could overcome the difficulties and dangers of his career. Indeed, he had a great deal of ambition and a very noticeable vanity, but they were aimed at reality and not at outward show. He was concerned with real power, not with its appearance.

Moreover his private life was so completely happy, that, in his case, the strongest impulses to ambition, discontent and an empty heart, were absent. In those two years of strenuous labour the wounds in his faith and self-respect, inflicted by his first love-experience, had healed. And at this moment there entered his life the woman who was to be its centre-point and its fulfilment until the end.

Young, extremely pretty, with a slim lithe figure, a

bold clear profile in a slender face, and great shining eyes, Käthe Kleefeld must have seemed an exotic miracle to the young man who was used to pale blonde maidenhood. In a married life that lasted six-and-twenty years this feeling of wonder at something unique and very precious, did not disappear; indeed it never lost its ardour. All that Gustav Stresemann possessed of love and desire, of yearning for the warmth of womanhood, was given to his wife from the day she came into his life until the hour of his death. There was for him no other woman in the world, nor could there be—all that his imagination could conceive of feminine lure and magic, he found embodied in this one woman.

Without this background of settled and unalterable emotion Stresemann's private life cannot be understood. It would be more exact to say that he had no private life; in all his years of development and rise to fame, his apprenticeship to world events, no woman, as a woman, played a part in his life, no single adventure great or small disturbed his utter devotion to his task. From the day he married Käthe Kleefeld, Gustav Stresemann's *éducation sentimentale* was ended. If his emotional life had been less entirely filled by this one woman, had this love not been the axis on which his whole life turned, he could not possibly have flung his entire intellect and energy, his almost superhuman powers of concentration, into his one concern, politics.

This emotional continuity did not make his life either impoverished or colourless. The happiness of his marriage lost nothing of its charm by the fact that he took it for granted. He was in love with his wife after twenty-five years just as he had been on the very

first day; but this affection was for him so natural, so devoid of any problem, and such an immovable factor of his experience, that in the structure of his inner life it seemed sometimes to figure merely as a defence against the assaults of the outer world.

In the years when he was so prominently in the public eye this emotional ingenuousness was destined to puzzle many heads less simple than his own. On one occasion, when he was already a great European statesman, he took an ambassadress down to dinner, one of those elaborate and elegant women whose dazzling loveliness was supported by all the arts and aids of allurement and experience. The spoilt creature could not get into any sort of satisfactory conversation with her neighbour. All allusions escaped him, he swept aside any attempt at scandal or gossip. The great lady was unwilling to let the conversation drop altogether, and in desperation for a theme she let her great black-rimmed eyes wander across the table until they rested on Frau Stresemann's glowing vivacious face.

"How beautiful your wife is looking to-night!" The words fell from two thin, highly-painted lips.

"To-night?"—the Foreign Minister's voice sounded brusque and almost astonished. "My wife is always beautiful."

This unshakeable loyalty to an affection which was the immovable foundation of his life, enabled Gustav Stresemann to complete an historic achievement in a period of less than six years. His unique contribution to history was made possible by the steadiness and composure of his emotional experience. His utterly transparent private life explains his passionate devotion to the public service.

Käthe Stresemann was her husband's shield against the outer world. She brought into the marriage the practical sense in which he was entirely lacking. She, who looked like a spoilt child of luxury, with all that unobtrusive elegance that seems so costly, was in reality a frugal provident housewife who knew how to use the young deputy's none too lavish means to provide him with a comfortable home. Stresemann was himself a man of few needs, and cared for few things that money could buy. He had never understood the attraction of money-making as an end in itself; he was satisfied if he could earn an adequate subsistence for his family and himself, and indeed he thought much less about himself than about his family. He enjoyed certain amenities of life; he valued good wine and a good cigar. But in the matter of luxuries his needs were very modest, and the only thing that possibly made his moderate means seem irksome was that he could not buy all the books he wanted, such as rare editions of Goethe, or a scarce biography of Napoleon. He had been a bad reckoner at school and remained one all his life. He never tried to exchange the advantages of power against those of money. Indeed, he would not have understood how to do so, for his abilities deserted him completely when figures came into question. Anything to do with money seemed too, to deprive him of his memory. He who knew by heart every important quotation from Goethe, and who, later on, was a compendium of documents and treaties, never knew the amount of his banking account, nor the contents of his purse.

Once, in the inflation period, during the summer months of 1923, he sent his private secretary, Henry

Bernhard, to the bank to get some money. With the meticulous caution that came over him from time to time he put the great bundle of crisp new notes in the old safe, which he had inherited from his father, in his room in the Neue Wilhelmstrasse. A few days later he again handed Bernhard a cheque and asked him to get the money. Blank astonishment was depicted on the young Secretary's round and honest face.

"But I fetched you a lot of money only the other day," he ventured to say, reproachfully.

Stresemann, who was himself a little bewildered, assumed the severe expression that he adopted when he was embarrassed, and said curtly:

"I have just spent it."

The expression on the young man's face was one of open incredulity, for he knew his master; however, at the moment no reply was practicable.

When Stresemann and his faithful staff migrated to the Chancellor's palace, the safe was partly emptied. In it was a neat bundle of notes, untouched, and not worth a stiver.

"We might use them for memoranda—they're quite white on one side," said Bernhard, who could not resist a last word, as he had been right.

The Chancellor laughed. "No, that would be too disrespectful to German currency. You had better burn them—and don't tell anyone about it."

Since that time he was very chary of safes and allowed others to look after his small supplies of ready cash.

The dissolution of the Reichstag in 1906 was followed by the election so bitterly fought out over the questions of colonies and the fleet. "The message of

the elections that have just taken place, was this," said Stresemann immediately they were over: "Germany has realised that she must have colonies; that she has taken her place in international commerce, and must have a fleet." This election was Stresemann's first opportunity to prove himself, for the Annaberg constituency, on the strength of his speech at Goslar, had offered him a mandate for the forthcoming Reichstag elections. In that poverty-stricken district of the Erzgebirge, before audiences of workmen and small shopkeepers, Stresemann depicted in glowing words the mighty dreams of German power on earth and by sea, of sovereignty in far-off colonies whose maintenance would cost the Empire many millions. His friends warned him against harping too much on this note; they pointed out that when the small man hears about colonies and a fleet, he immediately thinks of how much he will have to pay for them. But Stresemann asked them sharply if they thought he was the man to conceal fundamental facts for the sake of popularity. However, he was elected, perhaps because the pictures that he set before the eyes of those simple folk were so splendid and so strange, and stirred their secret longings for distant places of the world, or perhaps because they allowed the majesty of German power to dazzle them in their straitened lives—or simply because they were overcome by his youthful and infectious faith.

. . . .

He was nine-and-twenty years old when he entered the Reichstag—the Benjamin of that honourable assemblage. One day he was to become an unrivalled master of the parliamentary machine. He brought

with him qualities that predestined him to play a distinguished part in that as yet undeveloped form of popular representation and political constitution. His extraordinary oratorical gift was only partly responsible for his success, for the powerful momentary effect that he exercised on his audience, the spell under which he laid those who listened to him, was in a certain sense neutralised by the deeply rooted German distrust of rhetorical display. Much more important in helping him to the position that he won for himself, was his marvellous power of influencing men, which he mainly exercised in an interview *à deux*. His method was the simplest imaginable. The moment he sat down opposite a man, he was no longer confined within his own personality, he felt himself into the other man's mind and feelings with such amazing accuracy that he could follow the most unusual trains of thought as quickly as if he had been familiar with them for years. He could thus forestall objections, and so startle his interlocutor by his intuition that the latter found himself strangely disposed to reach an agreement. He was no psychologist in the ordinary sense, since, as has already been explained, his inveterate faith in human nature, his unlimited confidence, and his unshakeable optimism, distorted his view ; but his sudden flashes of capacity for self-transference into another's mind gave him moments of uncanny clarity of vision such as scarcely any German statesman has possessed before him.

To Stresemann, every conversation involved something in the nature of a cleavage of his personality. He thought simultaneously for himself and for his opposite number, and often, in impatience at his adversary's

stumbling efforts, he would state his arguments for him and then proceed to demolish them with the same particularity with which he had set them forth. There was nothing premeditated, sharp, or sinister in this power of entering into another soul. It was accompanied on his part by an utter candour—it was as though all the doors had been thrown open so that the other could speak with perfect freedom and unconstraint. This candour, averse from nicety of phrase, and not shrinking from criticism, indiscretion, or outbursts of temper, got the two men into touch, and the effect was strengthened by Stresemann's strongly expressed sense of humour, his disarming smile, appreciative allusions, and his delight at a telling phrase.

The secret of his success on the political stages of Europe, in Locarno, Geneva, Paris, and London, is to be sought in this almost indefinable faculty ; in this kind of momentary identification with a strange or even hostile individuality, without, however, the smallest sacrifices of his own point of view.

Yet the quality that was later to give Gustav Stresemann his unexampled influence as Germany's representative was, at the beginning of his career, accompanied by the same shadow that was cast by his gift of oratory. The deeply rooted mistrust of Stresemann survived his convincing services to his country and did not disappear until his death. He was dogged all his life by this persistent mistrust. His attempts at understanding were dismissed as abysmal falsity, his efforts after agreement as a feeble readiness to compromise, and his capacity of adapting himself to political realities brought him the irredeemable reputation of opportunist.

It was with such a burden of disabilities that he set his hand to the great achievements of his life. As he was without unconditional support, he had to gain his purposes by manœuvring with an ever-changing majority. German democracy resented his reputation as a flame that had been kindled beyond the frontiers; and indeed the position he won for himself at home was based on the esteem he had acquired abroad. But much self-discipline and many heavy tasks lay before him. Even the most clear-sighted could only dimly see the force that was within him. The man who first recognised his dynamic potentialities was the leader of his party, Ernst Bassermann.

After the first encounter at the Goslar assembly, Bassermann had begun to take notice of the young barricade-stormer of sanctified traditions. He got into closer touch with him, and gradually entrusted him with business of increasing importance. Slowly, indeed, the conviction grew upon him that here was his successor. One evening, when the young deputy and his wife appeared at a reception at Bassermann's house, the leader of the party cried: "Ah, here come the Crown Prince and his lady!" Gustav Stresemann blushed scarlet with pleasure. For years he carried Bassermann's remark about with him as a treasure of silent satisfaction. He set especial store by it as the first expression of an early faith in him; the first time an influential man had prophesied his rise to power.

III

THE CONSEQUENCE OF FAITH

GUSTAV STRESEMANN, Deputy, who began his political career by enthusiastically supporting the fleet-programme, and preached the necessity of colonial development, was utterly convinced that the destiny of the German people and the stability of the German state could only be guaranteed by a demonstration of visible power. When, in a speech before the German Navy League in 1907, he announced that the fleet-programme was a matter that concerned the whole German people, and that the future of the German people depended on it, he believed what he said with every fibre of his heart and brain. Gustav Stresemann, romantic and man of action, was first of all, and apart from all his other qualities, a representative of the German people. In him, the character of the race transcended his own personal character. Just as in his external appearance he was a typical North German, so in his thoughts and feelings he was a cross section of all the characteristics that go to make up the essential German spirit. He came from the heart of the great German masses, and lacked none of the national virtues or the national limitations. He breathed with the breath of many millions, and his pulse beat in the selfsame rhythm as theirs. His brain perhaps functioned with more speed and activity than the average brain of his fellow-countrymen, but it thought along the same lines,

and used the same ideas and images. Here, indeed, lay his strength, the source of his certainty and singleness of mind.

Never before has Germany produced a statesman that so exactly embodied the nation as Gustav Stresemann. He was no Junker, cut off from the masses by inherited feelings and prejudices, he was no diplomat with an admixture of foreign blood or foreign culture, nor, too, was he a man of the people severed from the other strata of society by revolt or despair. He was the very marrow of the German nationality at its most authentic—he was the German middle class. His character, if analysed, would yield all the distinguishing qualities of mass psychology.

His first creed, then, was force. His flaming speeches before the war, in which he urged the necessity of a strong fleet, were not in the least dictated by any warlike exuberance. He knew that the German people needed a long period of peace for its development, he knew too that, in Moltke's phrase which he was fond of quoting, there was no such thing as a good war, but he believed that the peace of Germany could only be secured by a drawn and shining sword. He proceeded on the assumption that Germany's commercial progress must arouse the envy of other nations, and believed that only a strong fleet could avert an attack by her jealous competitors. In the mentality of pre-war years, which he inevitably shared, actual numerical strength was regarded as greater security than any treaty. Visible force was surely much more inviolable than any paper guarantees.

With his belief in power went a belief in authority. In his faith in the wearers of the crown the romantic

glamour of divine right may perhaps have played a part, but much more prominent was the conviction that those at the head of affairs must not merely have much better information at their disposal than the mass of the uninitiated, but also much greater intelligence. He had enough independence to despair of the rigid German caste system, but he did not go so far as to question the fact that anointed leaders of the State were set above the common mass of men.

The criticism directed against the Emperor by Bassermann and Ballin, both before and after the war, was not without its influence upon him; and the fact that when he and Bassermann were invited aboard the Imperial yacht, William II plunged into a feverish conversation with various members of his entourage so as to avoid having to shake hands with the two middle-class deputies, had left an unpleasant after-taste. But he transferred his affections to the ruling house, and bestowed his unalterable loyalty on the Crown Prince, whom his romantic imagination conceived as persecuted for his liberal sentiments. The whole appearance of the young heir to the throne, his erect slim form, the assured elegance of his movements, his thin high-bred face and flashing blue eyes—every quality, in short, that impressed him more because they were lacking in himself—fascinated him completely. There was a touch of student's devotion about his affection for the Crown Prince, which he preserved through all the vicissitudes of the latter's later destiny.

It was towards the end of 1922, when Gustav Stresemann's name had already been mentioned several times in connection with the formation of the Government, and the Chancellorship seemed likely to be soon

within his grasp, that he one day deserted the long-drawn-out negotiations over the great coalition and went off to Wieringen. It was pure romanticism that made him do such a thing. "If you only knew," he said to some friends, "how lonely the man feels; it is horrible to condemn so young and active a man to such depressing inactivity, far away from his family and his own country, exiled on a barren island." (Dim reminiscences of Elba were hovering in his mind as he spoke.) "I can't forget his expression as he looked out towards the horizon. He is getting more and more like Frederick the Great."

This journey called for a good deal of courage. If his future colleagues on the coalition had come to hear of it, all attempts at constructing a Cabinet might have come to nothing. But at that time he still felt himself to be the legal representative of popular imperialism, authorised merely to preserve the heritage in safety until it could be restored at the appointed hour to his Imperial master. Years had to pass before he could sever this last bond that bound him to the conceptions of the past. But he preserved a human loyalty to the exile of Wieringen until the end of his life. He carried out the promise that he gave the Prince on that lonely island as soon as he was in position to do so. One of the first acts of his Government was to permit the Crown Prince to return to Germany, though the concession had to be extorted from his wavering colleagues and aroused a storm of protest abroad.

. . . .

Combined with Stresemann's belief in power and in authority was a belief in discipline. This mentality of blind obedience determined his attitude in the war.

Once he had completely convinced himself that the war had been forced upon a Germany beset by a coalition of envy and revenge, then all the chords of outraged nationality vibrated in his heart. All the romantic phrases of the war found an enthusiastic echo in his soul. No heroic image of the past was too outworn to be made to serve its purpose in this struggle of the nations. His conviction of the superior knowledge of those in high places, of the necessity for blind obedience to orders, did not permit him to criticise for one instant the conduct of the war, or to question its ultimate result. He was not, like Helmuth von Moltke, infected by the conviction of the futility of all things, no subtly pervasive rumours could shake his resolution—he believed everything he was told, even the war bulletins; perhaps he did not want to know what the war looked like from the other side lest his picture of the world might be shattered. The history of Gustav Stresemann's attitude in the war is the history of the German people, more especially on the "Home Front." "It is easy," he said in later years, looking back on his pronouncements in 1918; "to throw stones at those who believed in a German victory. But anyone who does so must be honest enough to admit that this faith in a German victory was held by the vast majority of the German people, and that, if this faith in victory was a crime, it was one committed by millions of the best German citizens."

The first quick victories at the beginning of the war confirmed him in his belief in the secret knowledge possessed by the military leaders. He was filled with pride when a personal interview allowed him a momentary glimpse into the secrets of the High Command.

His letters of the war years almost without exception contain such remarks as these—"Capelle told me" . . . "I heard from an authoritative source," etc. When Capelle said that America was negligible from a military point of view, Gustav Stresemann believed him, since he must know. When the High Command insisted on the U-boat war, Stresemann was one of its most eloquent supporters. In May 1917 he said in a speech in Munich: "The results of the month of April must have convinced those sceptics who, in spite of the Admiralty's assurances, have persisted in doubting whether it was possible to bring England to her knees by means of our U-boats. The English merchant fleet, or so much of it as is employed in provisioning the country, amounts to about nine to ten million tons. The neutrals are no longer disposed to sacrifice for England's benefit ships that will be able to earn double freightage by supplying the world with raw material after the war. England has inflicted on us privations that have often seemed hard to bear, particularly as affecting the generation now growing up; now she is suffering in the same way, only more cruelly. For two years we were the anvil; now we are the hammer. Even if America can really raise an army, there will no longer be tonnage to bring it to Europe."

So inveterate was this faith, that when the U-boat campaign failed, he tried to excuse the Admiralty by pointing out that the Admiralty memorandum dated from 1916, and between then and the declaration of unlimited U-boat warfare in February 1917, there had been time enough for England to take countermeasures.

But the day came at last, the ever memorable 1st

October, when, under the presidency of the Vice-Chancellor von Payer, the party leaders were summoned and the military situation was made clear to them. "Until the 1st October I believed that Germany could not be beaten," wrote Stresemann later. Now he was completely shattered. "We were torn by doubts whether the information given us was correct, whether the members of the High Command, who had laboured with such superhuman energy and worn out their nerves in their country's service, had not broken down just at the very moment when the last phase of the struggle called for the extremity of physical endurance." In spite of the doubts that first assailed him, his confidence in Germany's military resilience was so great, that after that meeting from which he returned so shattered, after the reports of the High Command that seemed like the end of all things, he wrote a letter to Secretary of State von Hintze in which he announced that, in spite of all he had heard, he could not agree to subscribe to an offer of peace. Erzberger's revelations before the Reichstag Committee in 1917, all the official memoranda that were accessible to him and were very pessimistic in tone, had not been able to shake his rooted faith. For his faith in authority was backed by his faith in discipline; and to him, discipline meant blind obedience of the civil population to its leaders.

Throughout the war years Gustav Stresemann's activity was devoted to the maintenance of discipline. Doubt was for him identical with treason. From this conviction sprang his detestation of Bethmann-Hollweg, in whom he sensed the absence of this powerful faith. "We lost the war diplomatically when we began to

fight," he wrote in the very early days. Even in August 1918, during his solitary and much-needed holiday on the island of Rügen, he struggled to keep his forceful confidence. "Everything is justified that helps us to endure; an attitude of steady cheerful optimism would be justified even if things were going badly." And, since he interpreted events in the light of his own insistent faith, he added: "We shall only convert the sceptic, who compares the situation at home and in the enemy countries, to a more optimistic view when we learn to set a proper value on what we have achieved." The bitter campaign that he carried on in 1917 against Bethmann-Hollweg and which ended in the fall of the Chancellor was a campaign against a doubter, against a Government that went about "with tears in its eyes."

His support of electoral reform which he tried to force on a wavering Government and a reluctant General Staff is also to be explained by this same attitude of mind. The people must be made to share the responsibility. But for him responsibility did not mean criticism but acquiescence, not doubt but affirmation. He believed he could in some measure create an atmosphere of common purpose, if this were possible in the cleavage between the secret intentions of the military leaders and the inevitable ignorance of the general public. He observed how under the parliamentary governments of France and England the people stood united behind their leaders, and hoped by a measure of electoral reform to rouse the German people to a new enthusiasm.

It was his ready faith rather than (as he alleged) his knowledge of affairs that induced him to give his support to the policy of annexation, which was to brace

the hopes of the German people and set before them the advantages of the war as something they could grasp. But behind the fighting masses at the front must stand united the masses of those who stay at home, in even stricter discipline than they. "Man fights not only with a sword but with his heart, and when once this power of resistance is broken, the sword grows blunt."

It was in such a state of mind as this that Stresemann was confronted with his country's downfall. It found him utterly unprepared, with his stock of inherited ideas and rooted preconceptions still relatively intact. And the revolution found him just as unprepared as the defeat. He could not understand why people should want to avenge themselves on guiltless victims for an elemental catastrophe brought upon Germany by an envious coalition. As he did not grasp the reasons for the revolt against the immediate past, he did not penetrate beyond the outer aspect of that November day; he saw only mutinous troops, improvised control of the streets, chaos and perplexity. He was indignant at that resistance, the rapid desertion of the masses to the other camp, the surrender of what had yesterday been sacred in exchange for views as yet only half-understood. The old world was falling because no one held it up.

For Gustav Stresemann, to whom the weary road of redemption and despair was unknown, this sudden defection had a savour of disloyalty, of opportunist betrayal in a crisis. Just as he failed to read the meaning of defeat, so he misunderstood the meaning of the revolution. In the days of confusion that followed the collapse, many efforts were made by the leaders of the new regime to exclude Gustav

Stresemann. In the history of the post-war years it is persistently recorded that Theodor Wolff opposed Stresemann's admission to the German Democratic Party because he was compromised by his support of the war.

Stresemann himself, in an anonymously published pamphlet, refuted the "current legends regarding the foundation of the German People's Party." The first negotiations over the fusion of his party, the National Liberal group, with the progressive People's Party and the new Democratic group, whose representatives were, among others, Theodor Wolff, Professor Weber, and Dr. Schacht, came to nothing owing to the attitude of Professor Weber, who, at a general meeting of the leaders of the three groups, directed a violent attack against the two smaller ones, "described them as repeatedly bankrupt and unworthy of public confidence," and laid down as *conditio sine quâ non* of the amalgamation, the exclusion of any persons politically compromised from a share in the leadership of the new party.

But when the Democratic Party had actually been constituted, and the National Liberal Party had issued its own manifesto, Dr. Friedberg, as one of the leaders of the latter party in Stresemann's absence, re-opened negotiations with the representatives of the Democrats. Stresemann wrote to Friedberg that he would not stand in the way of amalgamation, but his fundamental convictions did not permit him to work in the Democratic Party. He thus anticipated the Democratic leaders who did not want to be burdened with Stresemann, and indeed, during the negotiations, issued a manifesto directed against the annexationists.

In his attitude to the amalgamation, he was actuated by the consideration that the party chests were empty, and that it was obviously impossible to look to the industrial magnates of Berlin for election funds.

But Stresemann was not at a loss for an expedient. He approached the leaders of finance, who were brooding on the bitterness of defeat and refused to traffic with the new elements in the State, and secured their support. Hugo Stinnes, the gigantic figure who was to tower like a dark mountain peak over the post-war years in Germany, and who had been just as ardent an advocate as Stresemann, though from less unselfish motives, of the annexation of Briey and Longwy, the man who felt Germany's collapse as bitterly as if her ruin had been his own, became the pillar of the German People's Party.

Thus, at a crisis in German history, it happened that Stresemann's powerful dynamic force, which would perhaps have prevented the disintegration of the Democratic Party, and still more his capacity for learning a lesson, were not appreciated. In that same hour when an alliance with him was felt to be intolerable, he was to prove himself a master of the parliamentary game. In scarcely twenty-four hours, he had, as it were, stamped his foot, and called a new party out of the ground with himself as its leader.

Gustav Stresemann's reconciliation with the new era was thus delayed for some time by this gesture of defiance which was forced upon him. External circumstances, the abyss that still lay between To-day and Yesterday, drove him back to the old position which he had not really yet surrendered. His hour of recognition was not yet to strike.

At length it came, sudden and unexpected like a lightning flash. Stresemann's nature was not susceptible to slow influence, to the gradual infiltration of another system of thought. His was a mind of sudden turns, unsuspected intuitions, lightning dashes through a train of thought to its conclusion. His progress was a series of leaps. He found no difficulty in disengaging himself from a standpoint that he had recognised to be false, adopting another, and making it so much his own that it seemed to be part of his mental inheritance. So, too, the great and decisive change in his political career was rapid and immediate; at a stroke, the moment came. His faith in the policy of Imperial Germany, which had survived defeat and revolution, had first to be utterly destroyed before his recognition of the Republic could really take root.

It was a man and a conversation that gave this belief its deathblow; and this man was, oddly enough, no other than the personage mainly responsible for this policy, and the conversation took place at a relatively late stage in Stresemann's political activity—the late autumn of the year 1922. During the discussion of measures to deal with the inflation problem Stresemann came into constant contact with Helfferich. One of these conversations went beyond the limits of a technical discussion. Helfferich, agitated by the foregoing debate, became exuberantly communicative; the past was suddenly conjured up, and a glaring searchlight thrown on many dark passages hitherto unknown to Stresemann. He questioned Helfferich about the failure of the U-boat war which he had so ardently supported, and in which he had believed with such conviction. Helfferich looked in amazement at

the man who made so naïve an inquiry. His alert and cynical gaze surveyed the countenance before him that expressed an almost agonised apprehension. So much ingenuousness stirred his usual irritability beyond endurance and he almost shouted his reply:

"It could not succeed. We had very few U-boats when we began the U-boat war—the Admiralty always refused to build them. And later when we declared unlimited U-boat warfare, we had utterly miscalculated our powers of construction. . . ." The stream of eloquence burst over his unsuspecting listener, who was overwhelmed by a flood of figures, dates and proofs. All that he had hitherto regarded as unfounded slander and malicious invention, was true, and much also that was even worse. Thus had those in high places played with the destiny of Germany, and deliberately deceived the multitude; thus had incompetence joined hands with cynicism, thus had a devoted nation been betrayed by impotence disguised in self-conceit. He himself was one of the devoted fools who hung on the lips of Capelle and his like, and accepted every word as gospel. How these people must have laughed in their sleeves when they served up the lies which he proceeded to trumpet through the length and breadth of Germany. He flushed and felt ashamed of his own self, but behind the vanity of one deceived throbbed a deeper and a grinding pain. The conviction, against which he had shut his eyes so that he might remain undisturbed in his optimism, was now irresistible. He hurriedly took leave of Helfferich, masked his dismay with a few light words, and walked alone through the dark Tiergarten to his house. He

walked slowly, with his hands crossed behind his back, and shoulders bent.

He thought and thought as though the consequences would themselves point out a way. A system that contained the possibility of such fateful errors could not be sound. The pursuance of a policy of force when the means of supporting it were wanting, seemed to him criminal. Not merely the system must accordingly be false; the whole policy of force and conquest was mistaken and degrading.

In that hour of revulsion Gustav Stresemann did not stop at a mere settlement with the past. His reflections did not break off half-way. A policy of force without the means to back it was folly, but was it any less foolish when the means were at hand? At that instant, when his break with the past was complete, there arose within him the vision of an altered world. Surely the policy of force belonged to a world of yesterday. In an age such as this, an age of political and commercial interrelation, could a State pursue a policy that was only realisable at the cost of another State? And would such a policy be, in the long run, successful? Such questions as these crowded in confusion through his brain; and the answers took some time to crystallise. But on that autumn evening in the Tiergarten, that smelt of rain and withered leaves, he came to one conclusion. The system and the methods of the past were wrong. New possibilities must be adapted to a new age; and with this new age Gustav Stresemann now began to identify himself. He had entered upon the road to Damascus. The essential improbability had come about. Helfferich, a typical incorrigible, had converted Gustav Stresemann to the new age.

IV

AWAITING THE APPOINTED HOUR

In the Tauentzienstrasse, by the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, where the traffic surged past like waves foaming round a cliff, was the home of Gustav Stresemann. The windows of his room, which looked out on just that section of the street where the cars and lorries and trams hooted and clanged as they took the great curve, rattled slightly to the rhythm of the traffic. But the man who was seated at his writing table in the window paid no attention to the tumult without; indeed he hardly heard it, so ingrained within him was his capacity to cut himself off from the outer world, and immure himself in work. And he was commonly engaged upon three or four tasks at once. He dictated to his fair-haired secretary, who followed his torrential sentences without a question or a comment, one of the numerous articles that appeared sometimes under his own name and sometimes anonymously, while turning over the pages of a newspaper that lay open before him, now and again interjecting a remark on what he read, so that only a girl familiar with his ways could have guessed that these ejaculations and glosses were not part of the dictated text. In the middle of a sentence, his hand, which seemed to have a tense and oddly irrelevant life of its own, would seize the telephone—and until the number he asked for was announced, he went on dictating, resuming

Goethe's influence does not suffice to explain the passionate admiration of Napoleon that never left Gustav Stresemann all his life. Even during the war, when the masks and pictures of Napoleon abruptly disappeared from all the houses in Germany, when all the ancient hatred of the conqueror of Jena and the Beast of Tilsit was dug out of the abyss of oblivion, to serve to fan the flame of national fury, Stresemann found it possible to keep his adoration intact. In 1917 he actually delivered a great address on Napoleon in which he celebrated him as England's hereditary foe. His love of Napoleon was so strong within him that it forced him to seek a justification for it in those times of hatred. This speech, which was in a measure a plea for his own attitude, discloses some of the reasons that extorted his admiration of Napoleon. In the first place, he saw in him the organising genius, and quoted the dictum that in the modern world, Napoleon would have felt most at home at the head of a great syndicate. He felt dimly that Napoleon was the first modern statesman that history had produced, and that his rise to power offered the first example of a middle-class world-triumph, the first victory of a new time-rhythm over stale methods and ways of which the world was tired. Here for the first time was the establishment of a power that could express itself without the preconceptions of position, birth, and training—simply because it was conscious and deliberate power. Here first appeared the phenomenon that portended a break with the past. A man, born in a narrow middle-class circle, hampered by isolation in his boyhood, and by a want of comprehension of his unique abilities—" Bonaparte attracted

attention as a boy but he was not loved," was a dictum that Stresemann had always remembered—flamed up on the world horizon, became the destiny of Europe, and, in a time of turmoil, a principle of order after the chaos of revolution. But when, in a later passage, he tried to justify Goethe's attitude in the wars of Liberation, he said that Goethe had at first looked on Napoleon as the man who mastered the French Revolution. "If," he went on, "we were to try to transfer the position to the present time, we should imagine someone arising in the Russia of to-day, who would put an end to Bolshevism, restore order, revive the military glory of Russia by magnificent victories, and suddenly raise his country to a dominating position in Europe. . . . Solid currency in the place of *assignats*. Instead of anarchy not merely order, but victory and power. Surely such a personality must exercise an inevitable influence and attraction on the intellectual leaders of Germany of to-day."

What Stresemann especially admired in Napoleon was the dæmonic force that radiated from him like a breath of hot air, and laid a spell on those that felt it. "How can any man," he wrote, "with the slightest spark of poetry and imagination, fail to feel the glamour of such a personality?" He himself had felt it, vivid as it still was after the lapse of more than a century, and he was trying to explain it to himself. When he was alone and knew himself to be unobserved, he picked up the little leather bound volume of Napoleon's maxims that always lay upon his night table, and heavily underlined the observations that seemed to reveal the secret of this private citizen who had risen to be a ruler. They were mostly

phrases in which he found a faint echo of self-identification—consonances of ideas and, even more, of character—remarks on childhood and surroundings, on natural gifts that he himself possessed, views of human nature that he shared, and, above all, on the torment of strength suppressed.

On one occasion, at a time when he himself was bursting with unused energy, he quoted a remark of Eckermann, to the effect that Napoleon had been young at the time of his great achievements, and Goethe's answer: "A man must be young to do great deeds; I never wrote my love songs nor my *Werther* a second time."

When Gustav Stresemann repeated this remark, it was, for him, more than a literary reminiscence—indeed his whole attitude to art was so strongly subjective that he used it mainly to illustrate the present or to exemplify his own sensations. He felt in himself the urge to action, to take a hand in politics and a share in the decisions of those years, and his exclusion and inactivity, and the wastage of his powers, was very galling to him. Perhaps in his subconsciousness there lay a dark intimation of the short span he still had to live, that mocked at his apparently invincible vitality, and spurred him on to prove himself in deeds.

In the years that followed the collapse and guided the brief upheaval of the revolution into an ordered course, he was continually trying to extricate his party from a barren opposition and induce it to take a responsible part in the government; but events always conspired to force him into isolation. "Something always happened to defeat me," he complained later to

Lord d'Abernon. First it was the Kapp *Putsch* that burst upon the scarcely consolidated structure of the new State. Overnight Kapp seized power with the aid of General von Lüttwitz; overnight the Ebert-Scheidemann government fled from the threatened capital. The representatives of the German Nationals and the People's Party met to discuss what attitude they should adopt to the *fait accompli*, Stresemann himself was invited to a conference by Kapp and Lüttwitz, and subsequently offered himself to the other moderate parties as mediator between them and the new regime; but the fate of the movement was decided in a manner that constituted a new departure in history.

There was still bloody fighting in the streets of Berlin, bullets were whistling and machine-guns rattling round the Brandenburg Gate and in the Tiergarten, the grounds of the beleaguered Reichswehr Ministry were a network of trenches, when the general strike was ordered. The factories were silent, the tramways ceased to work, the water was cut off. When evening came, Berlin lay in utter darkness, the life of the capital had suddenly come to a standstill. The self-constituted Chancellor had countless pink broadsheets showered over the city bearing the terse statement that any man who was not at work the following morning would be shot; but in vain, the paper threat made no impression.

In a few days the workmen of Germany had broken the back of the *Putsch*. The movement, like all unsuccessful attempts at power, dissolved in laughter, leaving behind it a few of the moderate politicians who had compromised themselves by coming to terms

with Kapp, and were thrust aside by popular indignation.

A year later the People's Party again had to decide whether it would take part in the Government. It was at the time of the London Conference when the Foreign Minister, Dr. Simons, represented Germany. The history of the German offer that then miscarried is still veiled in the deepest mystery; in any case, the outcome was that one of the most trusted and able representatives of German democracy was found wanting when it came to dealing with an international question, and suffered a political defeat which his excellent intentions certainly did not deserve. Dr. Simons made the simple mistake of mitigating the German Reparations offer to suit German public opinion, and thus making it seem smaller than it really was, instead of embellishing it for the benefit of the creditor nations. There was talk later of a draft drawn up in a railway carriage, and based on misleading information. However this may have been, at the first meeting he suppressed the further proposals as worked out by German experts, which provided for higher payments as German trade should improve. The conference was at once broken off in an atmosphere of animosity, and the German Foreign Minister was confronted with the alternative of adopting the decisions of the Paris Reparations Conference, or submitting to the sanctions laid down at San Remo. With only three days for consideration it was not possible for Dr. Simons to shoulder the responsibility for the Paris Reparations plan, and on March 7th the sanctions came into force with the occupation of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and Ruhrort. Meantime the

Reparations Commission worked out a new scheme of payments which, on May 5th, was presented to Germany in the form of an ultimatum. The Fehrenbach-Simons Government resigned and left the decision to a new Cabinet.

In this heavy hour, when it was a question of assuming responsibility for an unpopular policy forced upon the country from without, Gustav Stresemann expressed himself as willing to form a Cabinet. He merely made the commitment of his party, and the industrial interests that stood behind him, conditional on a clear understanding regarding certain matters affecting international relations. He accordingly presented himself one day at the British Embassy and formulated four questions, with a precision that much astonished the English officials, in order to assure himself what alleviations might be expected, if he accepted the ultimatum.

1. In the event of the acceptance of the ultimatum, would Article 17, that laid Germany open to arbitrary demands for raw material and manufactured goods, be reasonably modified?

2. Would the 50 per cent. export duty be maintained?

3. Would the occupation of Düsseldorf, Duisburg, and the Rhine customs frontier be cancelled?

4. Would the industrial area of Upper Silesia remain in German hands?

In the Ambassador's absence, the Chargé d'Affaires referred Stresemann's questions to the Foreign Office. But it was Lord d'Abernon himself who conveyed the answers to Stresemann. They were unexpectedly favourable; unfortunately they came twenty-four

hours too late, as Wirth had already formed his Government.

The People's Party took no part in the Government, and in its name Stresemann rejected the London ultimatum—it was, indeed, to be his last refusal in the field of foreign politics.

The four questions submitted to Lord Curzon were the occasion of Stresemann's first real encounter with d'Abernon, whom he had once met for a few moments at breakfast with Hiller.

The Lord Protector, as Stresemann used jestingly to call him, the first British Ambassador in Berlin after the war, was an exceptional man, well adapted to exceptional circumstances. He was not a diplomat *de carrière*; he was regarded as the great expert in cases of disordered national finances, and had been sent successively to Egypt and to Turkey—anywhere in fact where it was considered essential to maintain Great Britain's prestige by unorthodox methods.

Post-war Germany, with its chaos of utter defeat, abortive revolution, and semi-adaptation to a new constitution, was regarded as too awkward a problem for a genuine diplomat of the old school. The remains of the Song-of-Hate atmosphere, of fury against the blockade, of contempt for perfidious Albion,—the land of hypocrites and tradesmen, were still so formidable, that every way to understanding seemed barred. England was the object of all the hatred that an exhausted and emaciated people could produce. The war propaganda had worked too well for the poison to be expelled from German blood at once. Accordingly d'Abernon was sent to carry out a sort of process of spring-cleaning, to clear the way for

a successor. But fate proved stronger than the astute gentlemen of the Foreign Office—the stop-gap Ambassador remained to bear a hand in shaping the course of German history. The world in which he found himself, a world in liquidation and crying out for guidance, aroused in Lord d'Abernon all the resources of his constructive power, which had never before been fully extended. The man was singularly well suited to his task.

Lord d'Abernon sprang in a direct line from the conquistadors who, in nobler and more spacious times, were able to conquer continents for the Empire of the never-setting sun. Perhaps, too, he had among his spiritual forbears a condottiere, one of those iron commanders who used empires and men's lives as barter for pictures and artists, and built a polished culture on a foundation of bloodless battles. Even in his appearance there was something of the type of these imaginary forbears.

A mountain of a man with a comparatively small head on broad square shoulders—the head of a Venetian senator on the body of a Colleone. A southern head with white hair and dark flashing eyes, and under the silver beard a winning smile that lay like an ever-present mask upon the hard face. In character and in appearance, this first representative of the British Empire in a distracted post-war Germany, was no insular Englishman, no typical representative of his race, who regards it as his first task to keep his British individuality intact. He had none of the stiff austere elegance that carries the fame of Savile Row into the wildest jungle. Loose, indeterminate-looking suits, trousers of fantastic voluminousness,

draped his gigantic form. His collar, always far too large, encircled his rigid neck like the collar of a cuirass; moreover, it was usually half-undone with the stud plainly visible—and the general disorder of his appearance was emphasised by a broad necktie, invariably crooked.

In character, too, there was a similar divergence from the traditional austerity. A man without prejudices, without preconceived ideas, with an enormous curiosity about his fellowmen and an insatiable thirst for knowledge. And yet impervious to every influence, self-enclosed and utterly self-dependent. A lonely man who never felt his loneliness, because the world always brought him new impressions, and the force within him had at last found a field for its activity. A cool, conscious man, in whom the pulsation of a burning interest in everything that went on around him, produced the illusion of warm sympathy. Indeed a strange phenomenon in our disrupted and distracted times.

Such a man came to Germany with the lines of his activity determined, with the intention of carrying out a perfectly definite task. An entire cycle of legends has gathered round the person of the British Ambassador. In the eyes of some, he was the Faust of the German Gretchen, to others he was Germany's angel of salvation; some looked on him as the administrator of Germany's bankruptcy, others as her guide to an assured future. Some saw in him the friend of Germany and the determined enemy of France, others reproached him with abusing German confidence for personal ends or for the secret purposes of his Government. But all these open attacks and whispered

slanders, all this envious respect and unwilling admiration, left one thing clear: his enormous influence on Germany's destiny.

"His Master's Voice"—such was the heading of an article in the *Temps* dealing with d'Abernon's activities. On one occasion, an English journalist who was visiting Germany between two journeys to the Far East, said to a Deputy in the entrance hall of the Reichstag: "By the way, who is Chancellor at the moment?" "Do you mean *de facto* or in name?" was the answer; "The *de facto* Chancellor is your Ambassador." In all these exaggerations there was a kernel of truth. Lord d'Abernon laboured indefatigably, with all the means at his disposal, at the task he had set before him when he came to Germany. He was one of the first to realise after the war that the grouping of nations imposed by the war could not be maintained. Germany was defeated—rather too completely defeated for Great Britain's taste, for the Continent was now threatened with a French hegemony. England had rid herself of one embarrassing neighbour only to acquire another equally embarrassing, though this time on military, not commercial, grounds. The age-long balance of power on the Continent was still the traditional foundation of English policy. The English people had needed a great deal of instigation to drive them into the war. In a country without compulsory military service it was always a problem how to raise an adequate army; and the authorities were well aware that the great majority of the nation were so sick of war that another would be impossible for long years to come. The dilemma therefore was, how to settle the affairs of

Europe so as to ensure a lasting peace. One method, invariably used and urgently supported by the Foreign Office, was to keep on terms with France at any price, even against the national conviction. The other was the reconstitution of Germany as a make-weight against French predominance, thus establishing a solid basis of peace on a European triangle whose corners should be England, Germany and France. D'Abernon was perhaps the first man in England clearly to envisage this second alternative; he was soon, indeed, to collect some supporters among the younger generation, but at the time he came to Germany his attitude must have seemed very revolutionary to his fellow-countrymen. It has always been something of a puzzle, especially since the publication of d'Abernon's memoirs, to say whether his disposition to Germany was one of genuine friendship—whether he loved the people for themselves, or whether he regarded them as important pieces on the European chess-board.

Emotion played a very small part in d'Abernon's attitude to Germany. He did not in any way share the sentimental leanings towards German culture that prevailed among the English intellectuals before the war, and again emerged after the occupation of the Ruhr as the result of sympathy with an oppressed people. The soul of Germany was to him a sealed book. He did indeed take the most honourable pains to enter into the intellectual life of contemporary Germany. The social stratum in which he lived, and perhaps, too, his imposing appearance, his title, and his position, made it difficult for him to frequent the company of people who might have unveiled for him

the spiritual face of Germany. He accepted all the invitations he received from artistic circles, but in such company he stood like an isolated tower, alone, enveloped in a sort of respectful vacuum, until his expression gradually revealed the amused astonishment of a visitor to a menagerie.

He actually read all the books that were recommended to him, and laboured through both volumes of *The Magic Mountain*, visited all the picture exhibitions, never missed a theatrical performance, but he was repelled by all the formlessness, chaos, and incompleteness that leapt everywhere to his eyes. He could not divest himself of his innate exclusiveness or emerge from the arched and rounded clarity of his own culture. There was a side to his nature that betrayed a kinship with the French abbés of the eighteenth century, a delight in mellowed lucidity, a feeling for aloofness and superiority, a fastidious pleasure in quick wit and telling phrases.

He felt the lack of these qualities in most of the Germans that he met, but he laid aside his personal preferences in favour of the mission he had undertaken. In all he did he was the friend of Germany, often against her own will—against her suicidal tendency towards inflation, and against her halting intelligence. His confidence in Germany, which he was one of the first to express after the war and to uphold against the most sceptical, remained unshaken, whatever his own countrymen felt, or whatever follies the Germans committed. He was often tempted—he, the heir of a centuries-old parliamentarianism and an age-long tradition of politics, to whom German postwar statecraft seemed almost infantile—to play the

part of *praeceptor Germaniae*—with, of course, the utmost tact, for he only came when he was summoned, and only gave his advice when it was asked. He was careful to avoid any direct interference. The most categorical observations that could ever be extracted from him were: "It would perhaps be desirable to . . ." Or: "There would be no harm in . . ."

On one subject only he expressed his opinions uninvited, indeed, as he himself admitted, he dinned them into the ears of every Government; for an understanding on this point was a condition of the achievement of the purpose which he pursued with such determination. Germany must be transformed into a State capable of paying her debts and keeping her contracts, and the first step to inner recovery as well as to the satisfaction of her creditors was the stabilisation of the mark. He went into the matter in detail with Rathenau whom he met nearly every day, though he could never prevail on him to abandon his theory of the passive balance of trade as the root cause of the collapse of the currency. In the Reparations question he, too, was the first to recognise that stabilisation must take priority of reparation payments—the first who uttered a warning against the final fixation of the total German debt, and recommended a provisional estimate. Even as early as the Brussels Conference in December 1920 d'Abernon tried to secure the adoption of a Reparations scheme; "He did his best," wrote Bergmann who was Secretary of State at the time, "to rush through an agreement that would have solved the problem once and for all," but his efforts were defeated by a want of understanding on the part of the authorities in Germany, which led them to miss the psycho-

logical moment, and by a revulsion of feeling in France, where after a passing inclination towards agreement, the nation reverted to its original attitude.

One of the reasons for Germany's slow conversion to d'Abernon's theories was, paradoxical as it may sound, the realisation of his powerful influence. His suggestions in the political sphere were readily accepted because their results could be tested, but there was more hesitation about following him in a matter of currency theory, which seemed heretical to most of the experts in Germany; especially as this was a subject on which the politicians regarded him as a master. The mistrust that accompanies every exceptional man as closely as his shadow, derived from d'Abernon's past history and his rise to financial power, and from the fantastic rumours that were circulated whenever a financial problem came up for discussion, on which he could speak with undeniable authority.

There were suspicious whispers that he wanted to introduce a sort of Ottoman Public Debt into Germany; or that he was speculating on the rise of the mark, and so forth; and the suggestions grew more precise, as the conception of the British Ambassador's speculative activities became more ill-defined.

The very men who showed themselves most accessible to his influence, and were most deeply under his spell, thought they could best prove their independence by refusing to follow the excellent advice that he offered them, quite without self-interest or personal ambition, and which revealed, indeed, an insight that was almost prophetic. The relations between d'Abernon and Stresemann were much

facilitated by one of the fundamental traits in Stresemann's character—his utter freedom from this feeling of *a priori* suspicion, to which may be added in this particular case, his inability to attribute low financial motives and designs of self-enrichment to men in an assured position of life.

The first tie between the two men was the fact that Stresemann lent a willing ear to d'Abernon's theories of finance and his Reparations proposals, allowed himself to be persuaded if not convinced, as d'Abernon himself put it; for a man who is sure of himself finds it easy to admit another's superiority in a sphere which is outside his own understanding.

Stresemann's readiness to enter upon a discussion of the ideas on which the Ambassador's heart was set softened the first negative impression which the latter carried away from his encounter with Stresemann, whose shrill voice, violent manner, his whole "wild and untameable" demeanour (as d'Abernon described it), and rather blusterous effusiveness and eloquence, must have been strange and painful to the Englishman.

Stresemann carried away from their first few meetings a singular feeling of astonishment. "I constantly asked myself," he used to say later on; "where d'Abernon got his information, by what diabolical methods of diplomacy he extracted what he wanted to know from the people he met; when I suddenly noticed that he merely asked questions. I have never known a man ask so many and such judicious, and such embarrassing, questions.

The earlier encounters between the British Ambassador and the chairman of the People's Party remained

without result, the more so as Stresemann entered just then upon a policy that, under the designation of a continental policy, masked an attempt at a direct Franco-German understanding. But before anything could be achieved, Erzberger's murder proved a serious set-back to Stresemann's ambitions, and a few months later his efforts to secure a share in the Goverment for the People's Party failed for the fourth time owing to Rathenau's appointment.

These transactions left him with a slight feeling of bitterness against Wirth, and he was soon to have an opportunity of repaying the Chancellor for neglecting his claims.

In September 1922 the President of the Reparations Commission, Barthou, came to Berlin. He there displayed an activity that far exceeded the scope of his official functions. He got into touch with politicians outside the Government: he was not satisfied with interviews with the leading Social Democrats, he wanted to meet the representatives of a Germany that could pay, and it was arranged that he should have a long talk with Stresemann. This must have been Stresemann's first official interview with a representative of France. For the first time Stresemann developed his theme of Franco-German understanding with which he was later to become so familiar. In spite of the difficulties of language it was an encounter in which question followed answer with the precision of swordplay.

The People's Party did not shrink from responsibility—said Stresemann, in answer to Barthou's inquiry; but they could not secure admission to the Government. Wirth had stood in their way on two

occasions; but he was able to assert on behalf of his party that they were at all times ready to enter the Cabinet. But they must secure a guarantee for constructive work; they could not run the risk of having every Reparations scheme curtly rejected by Poincaré, even though it offered the maximum sum that Germany could provide. All this sounded clear and precise. Barthou saw before him a man whose name he had never heard until a few days previously, a man who gave the impression that he knew exactly what he wanted, and also how to make his will prevail. And Stinnes, asked Barthou—could Stinnes be induced to support a reasonable offer? Stresemann replied with some asperity that the People's Party was not to be identified with Herr Stinnes, and in matters that affected Germany's existence no one would shrink from the necessary burdens. "Stinnes' young man," as he was called in the Reichstag, spoke a language that was new, and there was something in his tone that compelled Barthou to listen. He put some further questions that Stresemann parried by counter-attacks. Why this fear of a disarmed Germany on the part of a powerful France, he asked Barthou bluntly; and Barthou answered that if France did not hold Germany in check by military measures, in the state of feeling then prevailing in Germany it might easily occur to her to form an alliance with the East; and with her immense organising capacity she would not find it difficult to invent some chemical weapon and then attack France with the aid of Russia. "But," answered Stresemann; "this state of feeling of which you complain, Herr Barthou, has been aroused in the minds of the German people by France herself. When the

world war broke out there was no popular hatred against France, it was directed much more against England, who was regarded as the true instigator of the war. This feeling grew into a profound loathing of that country; Russia we regarded with a certain contempt; but we looked on France as an enemy to be respected. And if this attitude has completely changed, the reason for it lies not in the war as such, but in the prolongation of the war by French policy after the conclusion of peace."

Barthou had of course often heard this kind of talk before, and perhaps paid little attention to it, since it commonly came from people who deduced from these premises that no argument was possible between France and Germany. Here, however, he found a blend of asperity and conciliation, an emphatic statement of the nationalist standpoint combined with a clear readiness to reach an understanding.

"But your leading industrials have deliberately wrecked any policy that involved carrying out the terms of the Treaty," objected Barthou.

"Once we become convinced that such a policy will be not without advantages for us, you will see that Germany will not hold back. If Europe is ever to find rest and recuperation, the only way is an understanding between Germany and France, and such an understanding can first be reached in the sphere of commerce, by a *rapprochement* between French and German industry."

There is no other way. . . .

In that eventful autumn of 1922 that so profoundly changed his outlook in many respects, he found this way, and thereafter never left it.

As happens so often in Stresemann's life, in which enlightenment and changes of opinion may be ascribed to the influence of definite individuals, so in this instance also, a meeting was the prelude to a development. But it was not Barthou who was responsible for the change in his entire political orientation—the talk with Barthou was merely the result of an already altered view—the man who had prepared the way, spiritually and materially, for such an agreement, was the true champion of Franco-German understanding, the first Frenchman who fought for it with all his might, suffered for his efforts, and was, indeed, destroyed by their failure.

Professor Haguenin, at that time President of the Guarantee Committee of the Reparations Commission, was one of those personalities marked out by fate, whose work is a turning-point in history, and who pass into oblivion because it lacks the confirmation of success. He hovered on the verge of a brilliant career, but failed in his essential aim.

In the year 1900 he was appointed professor at the University of Berlin, the only foreigner, as he proudly pointed out, to receive that honour. He came without prejudices, unconstrained by personal or inherited opinions, with a large and generous curiosity, into a new world; and cast as he was in so typical a mould of French intelligence, he became the forerunner of a much later generation which is now labouring to build a bridge between France and the Europe of to-morrow.

In appearance he was of the Norman-French type that is little seen abroad—tall, broad-shouldered, fair-haired and blue-eyed—and yet the effect he produced

was so utterly French that it was impossible to conceive any other embodiment of the French type.

All the stages in the development of French culture, all its spiritual currents—a cross-section, almost, of its evolution for centuries—lay like superimposed strata in his character.

He was at once a merciless sceptic and an optimist, a despiser of humanity who instinctively looked for meanness, treachery, selfishness and envy in those with whom he had to deal; but with it all, he was insatiable of life, and loved to manage his fellow men, and behind all his suspiciousness was an ardent desire for companionship, a longing to lose himself in friendship and devotion. He was one of those not unfrequent unbelievers in the laicized land of France whose atheism more nearly resembled a burning and jealously guarded religion, and he was torn from time to time by outbreaks of mystical yearnings that betrayed embittered hours of revulsion to belief. For the most part, however, he was a refined hedonist, with senses fastidiously stimulated, who left none of the delights of life untasted—and with it all a doubter who disbelieved in the possibility of all pleasure, and whose brightest hours were clouded by the bitterness of ultimate futility.

Such a man as this, plunged as he was into all the intellectual life of Berlin before the war, absorbed its youthful aspiring vigour through every pore of his being, frequented the society of the best of the younger generation, and lived on terms of intimate friendship with a man like Erich Schmidt. It was not merely his intellectual fascination, not merely the fact that he was a dazzling conversationalist, a type that is now dying

out in our age of telegraphese, that won him the regard and friendship of the intellectual leaders of those days. Beneath that brilliant surface of polished epigram, ironic fantasy, and coruscating paradox, they suspected the existence of a tremendous power of conviction, a will to understand, a flame of faith the more fanatically guarded for all his destructive cynicism.

In those years before the war when only very few Frenchmen followed the intellectual movements in Germany, where a man like Gide dimly realised that there was yeast for French dough, Haguenin saw that the forces of the two nations were complementary and grasped the necessity for cultural co-operation. Moreover, beyond the intellectual sphere he was aware of the onset of dynamic commercial forces which must either bring the peoples together or sunder them completely.

The war shattered these tentative beginnings. The world was flung back centuries, imprisoned once again in strongholds of hatred from which the more enlightened tried to rescue the masses of both nations. Haguenin, on the ground of his intimate knowledge of Germany, was sent to Berne to fight in the campaign of hate, and appointed head of the Press Bureau. But he was not a man to allow even a world-cataclysm to eject him from a position that he had won at so great a cost. He was able to look on the turmoil of Europe as a passing phenomenon—he was, indeed, one of the very few who, during the war, thought of the epoch that would follow it. He did the work that was required of him in Berne, and applied to it all his gifts of personality and insight—but undisturbed by all this propaganda which he himself was conducting, he clung

to the principles and even the sympathies that had been his before the war. He so despised the fury that had been unchained on either side, that, in his delicate position he ventured to allow a German woman friend to pay a secret visit to Berne, without realising that this disregard of a ritual of hate might get him into irreparable trouble.

In some mysterious way, all who refused to wear the gyves of national servility suddenly became aware that here was an island of refuge in the world storm. As the war grew prolonged and more embittered, more and more frantic efforts were made to put a stop to this senseless mass-murder. During those war years almost every attempt in the direction of peace was conducted directly or indirectly through Haguenin. He was sought out by adventurers, typical phenomena of troubled times, as well as by serious politicians and anxious commercial magnates; by fanatical pacifists, crazy idealogues, and mysterious persons who claimed to be initiates of politics, and others who claimed to possess influence in the opposite camp; by men with schemes that might be utterly fantastic or entirely practical, by intellectual soldiers of fortune and political suspects—in a word every sort of froth flung up the by war, found a refuge with Haguenin and there proceeded to ask or give advice. He received them all with the same good humour, which sometimes passed unexpectedly into indifference, the same slightly ironical smile born of an instinctive scepticism. But everyone who had anything important to say, everyone whose suggestions seemed in the slightest degree practical, was sure of Haguenin's active support.

He was constantly extending feelers in every

direction, and his continued want of success did not discourage him. The history of the peace efforts made during the war is almost entirely contained in Haguenin's papers—that absorbing and, from time to time, grotesque story, which has not yet found its chronicler.

Among the pilgrims to Berne at the beginning of 1917, one of the most important was Matthias Erzberger. The peace resolution for which he had contended in the Reichstag was merely the outward and visible sign of his activity. He conducted his campaign in Germany on a plan that he had worked out with Haguenin. In his lengthy interviews with the chief of the French propaganda, which were veiled in all the mystery of a secret conspiracy, they both sketched out in detail the lines of a peace that would be acceptable to both countries. This document, drawn up by two men who belonged to opposing camps, both inspired by passionate love of their respective countries, both of them in a position to appreciate the true state of affairs, should some time be compared with the combined effort of the Allied statesmen at Versailles. The former would have provided France with far fewer positive advantages than she acquired, after the destruction of Germany under the treaty of Versailles, but Haguenin was thinking of the future, and was anxious, with that uncanny foresight of his, to spare both countries the convulsions of the post-war years. The document of the Berne negotiators was neatly written out in blue and red ink in a blue-covered exercise book, and looked very much like a carefully transcribed schoolboy's essay. But it was not destined to be submitted to the examination of posterity. The murderers of Matthias Erzberger did not suspect that

they were slaughtering a man who was only prevented by the shortsightedness, folly, and moral cowardice of his fellow-countrymen, from becoming the saviour of his fatherland and preserving her from ultimate defeat. The blue exercise book remained carefully hidden away in Haguenin's writing table and the bloody juggernaut of war rolled inexorably onwards.

Then came Germany's collapse and the struggles over the Versailles treaty. Haguenin, who took part in the peace negotiations, still kept in touch with his German acquaintances. Erzberger again visited him to ask what he thought would be the effect on Germany's future if she adhered to her decision not to sign the treaty of Versailles. Haguenin was most insistent that the treaty had better be signed. After a stormy discussion with Clemenceau he had ascertained that preparations had been made to invade Germany, in case the German representatives did not sign, and those who hated Germany would prefer invasion to a peaceful settlement.

After the armistice, Haguenin was one of the first Frenchmen to set foot on German soil. He came to Berlin nominally as head of the French trade delegation, but in reality as the first unofficial French ambassador after the war. He was to have been appointed official ambassador after the resumption of diplomatic relations, and one who was better acquainted with Germany could scarcely have been found for the post, but the Quai d'Orsay did not look with favour on so unorthodox a selection.

However, he did not let the absence of official recognition deter him from assuming the functions of an ambassador. In his house on the Burggrafenstrasse,

which produced the effect of a little island of France surrounded by the Old West quarter of Berlin, he welcomed with all the lavishness of true French hospitality, old friends and new acquaintances, whom he found in the most heterogeneous circles of society. Side by side with leading Social Democrats like Dr. Breitscheid, whose face, he used to say, was as gloomy as Germany's future, were to be found Hilferding and Paul Lewi; pacifists like Count Kessler and Helmuth von Gerlach, in the company of irreconcilable old generals, ex-reactionary University professors, moderate German Nationals like Hoetzsch—in a word, everyone who had something to find out or to say. The fact that, on account of his activities at Berne, he was regarded with mistrust in certain circles, indeed at the Ministry of Defence he was reputed to be a dangerous spy, did not affect his social popularity. When he was appointed President of the Committee of Guarantees on the Reparations Commission, he applied his negotiating ability to ease the friction that inevitably occurred between German officials and the Commission. The odd thing about his undoubted success in this rôle was that he was utterly devoid of the suavity usually considered necessary for such activities. He was often brutally candid and flung the crassest truths into people's faces, but his biting criticism did not offend his own countrymen, not even Poincaré, whom he accused of possessing the *esprit de la frontière*, nor the Belgians, of whom he said that they were never tired of making capital out of the invasion of their country, nor the notabilities, official and industrial, of Germany.

When Stinnes remarked on one occasion to the Belgian member of the Reparations Commission that

German industry needed inflation to increase its producing capacity—the mark then stood at 6,000—Haguenin said in a fury to Stinnes, with whom he was personally on excellent terms, that he hoped "Herr Stinnes would not one day have to pay the penalty in his own person for such criminal folly."

Strange it was that in those post-war years in Germany two foreigners were to play the Cassandra part of warning the country against inflation—a Frenchman and an Englishman. It was over this question that d'Abernon and Haguenin met; two such dissimilar personalities were otherwise hardly likely to have come into contact. D'Abernon's odd taciturnity, that in official and semi-official transactions confined him to the crudest questions and the simplest observations, while his sharp judgments and venturesome phrases were reserved for his intimate acquaintances or his diary, stood in too strong contrast to Haguenin's exuberance to admit of any real understanding between the two men. The racial constraint, the fundamental incommunicability of the French and English mentalities, prevented either of them realising that they were both speaking the same language.

In Haguenin's view, also, the destiny of Europe after the war was contained in the three problems: stabilisation of German currency, reparations, and security. He too knew that post-war Germany could be no danger to France, and that her disarmament to the last rifle was of less importance than the establishment of peace for the next thirty or forty years. For this reason he, like d'Abernon, tried to think in the terms of to-morrow and not merely of to-day.

It was only after immense effort, and interminable

conversations with Rathenau, which tended to degenerate into monologues from the Frenchman, that he at last extorted from the German Government a concession that seemed to him the limit of what was then attainable. The German Government expressed itself as prepared to enter a standing Guarantee Committee of the League of Nations in return for an immediate recall of the Interallied Military Control Commission. D'Abernon transmitted the offer to London, and Haguenin to Paris—and a curt refusal was shortly received from both Lloyd George and Poincaré. The same destiny was reserved for many other of Haguenin's suggestions. "What is the German name," asked Haguenin once; "of that well-known novel about letters that never arrived—ah yes, *Letters That Never Reached Him*. Well, all the Notes I send to my government are letters that do not reach it—at least they don't appear to do so. . . ." However, that did not deter him from drawing up and sending endless letters, reports, and admonitions. He was indefatigable in making new contacts, and after a while his attention began to concentrate on Stresemann. He at first regarded him merely as the representative of a commercial group which he was anxious to draw into co-operation; but he suddenly became aware of the man's force and receptivity of mind, and sought in him the hope of an understanding between the two peoples in the hitherto desperate sphere of foreign politics.

For Stresemann, Haguenin was something like a discovery of France herself. He did not suspect that this, the first Frenchman with whom he had come in contact, could hardly be regarded as an object-lesson,

that he was an outsider among his own people, although he was, in fact, an embodiment of a certain number of French characteristics. Stresemann only saw in him what was typical and distinctive of the whole nation, but it was enough to give him a psychological understanding of the French character in general, and a just view of the presuppositions of French politics.

He was soon to have the opportunity of making practical use of his observations, but, in the meantime, event followed event in bewildering confusion; the cauldron of domestic politics began to boil, and during those months that were to be so momentous for the country's future, flung up a political crisis.

For this crisis Stresemann himself was partly responsible, and his conversation with Barthou was its immediate cause. Barthou himself realised that after that semi-official interview the exclusion of the People's Party was no longer practical, and he left Berlin with the feeling that Wirth had been overthrown and that he had played the part of destiny.

When Wirth heard of the meeting between Barthou and Stresemann, he on his part tried to establish relations with the People's Party. Georg Bernhard offered his services as mediator. But the dinner that he arranged for Wirth and the leaders of the People's Party turned out badly for the Chancellor. Rumours of these negotiations reached the Social Democrats, who thought Wirth had gone behind their backs and betrayed them. Wirth, the most faithful friend of the Left, was overthrown by his former allies. But Wirth's fall did not, as was expected, lead to Stresemann's rise to power. A Business Cabinet was formed as an interim

solution, with Cuno and Rosenberg at the head of it, and Stresemann once again saw his hopes disappointed. When the Government was announced in the Reichstag he seized the occasion to make a public declaration of the foreign policy that he was prevented from putting into practice.

The profound influence of the men with whom he had been in contact, the conviction he had drawn from his meetings with d'Abernon, Haguenin, and Barthou, were very observable in this speech, recast by his faith in action, and made doubly emphatic by a determination that always looked forward to the moment of achievement, to a point where others would only have seen difficulties and obstacles.

One sentence in the speech sounded like an answer to d'Abernon's stabilisation campaign. "I wish to make myself perfectly clear; a Cabinet and a Minister that do not use their utmost efforts to establish our currency, I shall regard as traitors to the future of the German people."

He was referring to his interview with Barthou, when he spoke of his discussion with a "very prominent Frenchman, and a man of great influence in present-day France;" he mentioned the attempts at *rapprochement* by German and French industrials, and repeated from the Reichstag tribunal almost the very words he had used to Barthou. "I think this is the only possible way out for France and Germany. The practicability of some sort of commercial co-operation between France and Germany, is one that in our position we ought seriously to consider." He did not fail to point out that the France of the Poincaré policy was not the only France; there were other elements in the

country that realised the cohesion of great industrial interests, and far from desiring to destroy Germany, were anxious to work with her. "We may now observe a war of ideas taking place in France; on the one side there are those who demand productive pledges but whose real aim is to secure the Rhine frontier; but there are others who are aware that, after all, France is a member of the community of world industry in spite of her strong agrarian bias."

His speech ought really to have caused a great sensation in the Reichstag, had it not been the inveterate habit of that assembly to cling to the already existing labels, and refuse to consider the possibility of leaving the accustomed paths of party politics. In view of the fact that the policy of *rapprochement* with France was regarded as a monopoly of the Left, no one would believe that the chairman of the People's Party could adopt it. And yet Stresemann's future foreign policy was already contained in his Reichstag speech of 25th November, 1922, which closed with the following exhortation. "One thing I would especially impress on the Foreign Minister; in all these matters, direct your policy towards Paris, grasp the earliest opportunity of getting into touch with France." As he spoke those words, he thought, in common with the whole Reichstag, that the precarious and interim Government would not last over the Christmas holidays, and that he would soon be in a position himself to carry his policy into practice.

Shortly after the New Year, indeed, the Business Government which had, in the words of a Social Democrat speaker, been "greeted with its own

obituaries," would have come to an early end in an atmosphere of general contempt, if the invasion of the Ruhr had not, just before a crisis in German policy, struck like devastating lightning flash at any possibility of European reconciliation.

V

IN THE DARKNESS OF THE RUHR CONFLICT

THE invasion of the Ruhr had long hovered spectrally on the political horizon of Germany,—it made its appearance at every conference like a semblance of horror whose existence is hardly credited; when it became a reality, the blow fell upon an unsuspecting and bewildered people. The Cuno-Rosenberg Government, under the tactful tutelage of the English Ambassador, had done its best to relieve the tension in foreign relations. In December a Reparations plan was submitted to the Allies, and brusquely rejected by Poincaré. After this, the Government grasped at the suggestion of the American Secretary of State, Hughes, and made an offer of security intended to allay French apprehensions. The idea, excellent in itself, was unfortunately clothed in such a form as to deprive it of the slightest prospect of success. It was not merely the proposed "Truce of God" for a generation that by its limitation gave ground for mistrust, but also the clause providing for a plebiscite, inserted, as it would appear, at the suggestion of the Austrian Minister, that deprived the offer of its entire value. It was psychologically inconceivable that the opposition forces would be content to entrust the decisions of war and peace to a people of whose sole responsibility for the war the world was then convinced, which was regarded as an embodiment of the will to war, and had openly pro-

nounced treaties to be scraps of paper. The proposal, so well intentioned and so unfortunately drafted, was reckoned against the long record of Germany's evil deeds, and shared the fate of nearly all the efforts of the Cuno Government.

In the first weeks of January it seemed as though this very failure would prove the Government's undoing. Then the catastrophe of the Ruhr burst upon the country and welded the German people into a great national unity. Passive resistance was no invention of the Cuno Government, no measure dictated from above. Dr. Breitscheid, in his speech in the Reichstag, described the Ruhr conflict as a class war, and was shouted down by indignant Nationalists. Still, the resistance on the Ruhr was the classic weapon of the working class, it was, in fact, no other than the General Strike, which Briand once impressed on the Amsterdam Socialist Congress as a method of preventing war.

The occupation of the Ruhr swept the great wave of national indignation to a height it never reached during the war or the defeat. All the stored sufferings of the war years, all the bitterness and humiliation of the years that followed, fanned the blazing flame of the hatred of France. Immediately after the war, the burning agony of defeat could not arouse a genuine and far-reaching indignation against France. The Germans were so weary, so infinitely weary. The people found themselves deceived, betrayed, driven upon an evil destiny by their own leaders ; but when, in a sudden surge of anger, they had flung aside those who had been responsible—their strength had been so shaken by hunger and privation that no more than this

was possible—they wanted one thing and one thing only; they wanted to forget, to return to a normal conduct of life, and to banish the war like a nightmare from their hearts and brains. In this return to normality they found themselves constantly held up and hindered by pinpricks of humiliation. But this too they endured with the calm self-containment that is the German people's well of strength. They would not suffer themselves to be roused to anger by the outburst of fury that swept through the ranks of the Right. "The enemy stands on the Right"—the kindling phrase of Wirth's during the turmoil that followed upon Rathenau's death, was but the expression of a feeling very present to the great mass of the German people. But the occupation of the Ruhr touched the most sacred privilege of the people—the free disposal of their labour; hence the cry of indignation that rose from the masses, a single and unshakeable will united all the forces of the nation, and flung it upon the enemy, the now detested enemy.

A unity unexampled in German history was achieved under the pressure of this policy of force. All were gripped by this unity of hatred; the workers, whom the inflation deprived of the fruits of their labour, the middle classes, emaciated by the war and starved in the years that followed, the desperadoes, dispossessed by the war, for whom the precarious peace had no place, the disinherited of yesterday and the rulers of to-day—all sought for some agency that might be made responsible for their misery and found it in France. From this psychology passive resistance was born. But there was a practical as well as an ideal side to it. The gesture had been spontaneous. But to organise so

powerful a movement for any considerable time, to give it the breath to sustain it, a far-sighted Government was essential, with men who could take account not merely of the present but of the future. Cuno and Rosenberg met the French menace with a flat and uncompromising No! without reflecting whether it would in the long run be possible to carry the consequences of such an attitude. "The German Government made mistakes in the organisation of passive resistance," wrote the able Secretary of State, Bergmann, and he was right; he was better acquainted than anyone with the commercial relations of his country at the time, and he makes a list of those mistakes. When the Government called upon the railwaymen for an absolute resistance, they were not merely handing over the control of the railway system and the administration of the occupied territory to the Franco-Belgian regime, but also burdening themselves with the immense responsibility of supporting the men who, like heroes of antiquity, sacrificed their security and existence to the State. The coffers of the Reich were empty even before the occupation; the failure of the revenues from the Ruhr area increased an already gaping deficit, and steps had now to be taken for the relief of those ejected from the Ruhr, whose loyalty deserved a generous reward. In an hour of tense feeling measures were undertaken that reason would not perhaps have approved. It was of course natural that dismissed officials and railwaymen, homeless refugees and their families, should be maintained, but the paper money that flowed into the Danaïd pitcher of the Ruhr was poured out upon deserving and undeserving alike; beside the silent heroes were many,

as in every war, who made capital out of their distress, true profiteers of misery. The policy of subvention in the long run shattered the miraculous stability of the currency that, to the general amazement, accompanied the miracle of passive resistance.

The Finance Minister Hermes realised from the very outset that the success of the German policy depended on its psychological effect, and that consequently the most important factors in the situation would be those that most powerfully influenced the imagination, and of these the most outstanding was confidence in the stability of the mark. The invasion of the Ruhr was immediately followed by a collapse in the currency. The mark, which in the first months of winter, oscillated between 6,000 and 8,000, in the first few days after the occupation of the Ruhr, dropped to 50,000. Such an ominous development had to be remedied at any cost. Hermes threw 100 millions of gold marks from the securities in possession of the Reichsbank on to the gold markets of Berlin, Amsterdam and New York. This well-prepared stroke did not fail of its effect. In a fortnight the mark rose from 50,000 to the dollar to 20,000. This support of the currency was energetically continued in spite of the appalling scarcity of money that suddenly seized like a strangle-hold upon trade and industry. For a time the mark remained steady at 21,000. But the heavy inroads on the national finances were so great a strain on the currency, that the artificial structure shortly and inevitably collapsed.

The breathing-space allowed by the adjustment of the currency offered possibilities of trade, of restarting the commercial machine, so that every advantage

might be taken of a situation so unexpectedly favourable. But Cuno and Rosenberg, when called upon to guide the German people at a time of great distress and unprecedented national agitation, soared above the narrow scope of their appointed task into a heroic atmosphere in which it would have needed the most intense exertion to enable them to continue. In that hour of indignation they both found words that made articulate the feeling of a whole nation. A vote of confidence, the like of which had scarcely ever been given to a Government in Germany, crowned that solemn hour. But after the exaltation of the day of mourning, came the demands of everyday, and both men who had tasted the heady draught of popularity, found it hard to put aside the buskin of the great refusal.

No negotiations with the French without the re-establishment of the *status quo*—they had pledged themselves to the heroic gesture—and they did not know how they were to accommodate it to the prosaic reality, which demanded that passive resistance should only be employed so long as it was a serviceable weapon. The French were taken aback by the unexpected reaction to the Ruhr invasion. They had, by this proceeding, thrown away their friendship with England, and broken the *entente cordiale*; for they had calculated that their English ally would be on the spot so soon as the hour arrived for the division of the spoil. But there was no trace of spoil; an unarmed people suddenly arose and humiliated a nation under arms. "We feel like rats in a trap;" such were the words used in some of the French reports from the Ruhr. This was the moment

in which France would have been found compliant. Voices were raised in the French Press that frankly inquired whether the occupation would produce the desired result. Those responsible for the operation themselves began to waver. There were repeated interviews between Poincaré and Theunis, and their consternation was clearly indicated in the published communiqués. One statement actually looked like an attempt to resume relations with Germany. It was to the effect that the two Allied Powers could not evacuate the Ruhr on Germany's bare word, they could only do so in proportion as Germany fulfilled her Reparations obligations.

The hour had struck when Germany should have submitted a Reparations scheme, which would certainly have been examined in a more accommodating spirit than the previous offers. Professor Haguenin redoubled his efforts to make this clear to the German Government. He himself, the official representative of France on the Reparations Commission, was one of the victims who suffered most by the Ruhr policy ; it was a deed of violence that destroyed the work of his whole life. Shortly before the fatal January of 1923, he went to Paris to make it clear to Poincaré, the father of the proposal, that this threat was only effective so long as it was not carried out. To his great astonishment, he found Poincaré himself wavering and uncertain, and inclined to shrink from the responsibility. But in the meantime another had assumed his spiritual heritage. Millerand, the one-time Socialist—a member of the important Renegade Party, as Briand once said—suddenly proclaimed an irrevocable policy of force. Haguenin asked for an audience at the Elysée to warn

Millerand against the fatal step. When it was over, trembling officials related that those decorous rooms had never witnessed so stormy an encounter. Confronted by a crassness of mind against which all his arguments beat in vain, Haguenin, who saw the whole sense and purpose of his life betrayed, and in a flash of enlightenment glimpsed the disasters to come, was seized by one of those accesses of fury that shook a frame already weakened by disease, for all its outward aspect of strength. He shouted his plain opinions into the face of the bewildered President, and legend has it that the interview concluded by Millerand saying: "One of us must be a fool;" and Haguenin's reply: "It is certainly not I." Whereupon the horrified listeners heard the great door of the Presidential chamber torn open by Haguenin's angry hand and slammed behind him with a crash.

It was a gloomy return to Berlin, and a gloomy time was now before him. The Germans who had to deal with Haguenin were not allowed to guess what was going on in the man's mind, how intense was his indignation, how all his own hopes had been destroyed at a blow, and how he was doing his utmost to save what might still be saved from the wreck. The man for whom the occupation of the Ruhr was a deathblow that he was not destined to survive, found himself in Berlin an outcast in a hostile world. A laboriously constructed world of confidence and trust had been swept away. Anxious officials gave him to understand that his life was in danger and that he would be well advised to leave Berlin. But he would not allow himself to be frightened away; he stayed in Berlin although the most effusive of his former acquaintances gave

him a wide berth when they caught sight of him in the street; although his most trusted friends were suddenly out when he called on them, and in the hotels and restaurants which he formerly frequented and where he enjoyed a great reputation as a connoisseur, he was confronted by notices—"Dogs, French, and Belgians not admitted;" although, too, his faithful servants refused to sleep in the house, his telephone buzzed strangely whenever he asked for a connection and he became convinced that every word he uttered was carefully recorded, and he knew himself to be watched and in constant danger—he not merely stuck to his now meaningless post, but strove even more desperately to end this conflict than he had struggled to bring the great war to an end.

For Haguenin, even more bitter than the social boycott to which he was exposed, was his feeling of impotence, like that which had come over him in the darkest hours of the war. He, better than any man, knew his countrymen's moods, he read the reports from the Ruhr, he attached the right psychological meaning to the astonishment at the German resistance, and he tried to make it clear to the Germans that now was the moment to make an approach. Open or disguised mistrust, or at the best a shrug of the shoulders, were his only answers. There were few who would listen to him, only one or two isolated individuals in whom his words found an echo; and one of these was Gustav Stresemann. For Stresemann the Ruhr conflict was the crucial test of his life.

If there was any man in Germany from whom an attitude of obduracy might have been expected from

his previous record, that man was Stresemann. The man who had preached a fight to a finish, and had been so unaccommodating during the period that immediately followed the war, might have been expected to adopt the same unyielding attitude over the Ruhr conflict, and to have sought personal popularity in the glorification of the defence; for the example of Cuno and Rosenberg clearly showed how easy it was to allow oneself to be carried away on a wave of popular indignation.

But, in the meantime, Stresemann had learned the lesson of the war, and had grasped it more completely than the others. In those days he had never had the smallest doubt of a German victory; now, he did not need a Helfferich to explain how ill-equipped his country was for the struggle. He knew that it was impossible for Germany to finance the Ruhr conflict for any length of time. He suffered no less than the rest under the outrages inflicted on his countrymen, his nerves were no less sensitive to humiliations than they had been in earlier years, but he held himself in check, for he saw defeat ahead while everyone around him shouted victory. He who had been so complete a victim to war psychosis, remained immune to the much more infectious psychosis of the Ruhr.

He defined his attitude at the time in his speech to the Reichstag on 17th April. "I understand," he said, "the tension between a strong and well justified national feeling—the anxiety that Germany should not tolerate her present treatment, and any policy that is realisable in practice, which is the only policy that any Government can and should adopt at present." The

reverse side of Stresemann's character, his recognition of what may be attainable, a just estimate of available possibilities, in brief, the attitude of mind that is commonly indicated by that much abused word *Realpolitik*, here found expression.

Others, too, saw the limits of what was attainable; the politicians of the Left did not long cherish the hope that France would withdraw her troops from the Ruhr area before sitting down to negotiate. But they had not the courage to express their conviction otherwise than in whispered conversations among themselves; they knew that the legend of the "stab in the back" would be brought up again at the slightest sign of compliance. The advocates of an understanding were obstinately silent in those days when an attempt at negotiation might perhaps have saved Germany from the catastrophe of collapse in the dance of paper billions.

"What does an active policy mean?" asked Stresemann in the Reichstag. "It means, ultimately, a readiness for every international situation so as to be able to use it to the advantage of Germany. But what advantage can we draw from the international situation in which we find ourselves? We can, at least, make the way clear for international agreements and provide a final solution of the Reparations question, and thus obtain the freedom of the Ruhr and the Rhineland." In those weeks of consternation Stresemann developed a feverish activity. He again tried to convince the Government that passive resistance was not an end in itself, and the hour of their astonishing success was the very hour in which to open negotiations. "I feel like Siegfried," he complained to his friends; "trying to

induce this old Hagen of a Government to take the leap."

Only a man in such close accord with the conscienc of his country, only a man so certain of his ow convictions as Stresemann, could, in that hour (national exaltation, conjure up the ghost of a surrend(which he knew was to the interest of his people an could avert disaster. While Cuno and Rosenber; rigid in the attitude they had assumed, passivel allowed events to storm over their heads, Streseman used all the limited opportunities at his disposal. A early as 22nd February, 1923, he gave a long intervie to the correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, i which he astutely tried to transform the Ruhr affa from a Franco-German dispute into a matter fo negotiation with the Allies. He had found a formu that might mitigate the unfortunate effect of tl demand for a re-establishment of the *status quo*, whi(had been aimed against France, by broadening tl basis of negotiations. In this interview he also touch(upon the question of security; he would gladly ha made a more precise pronouncement on the point ar also added an offer in respect of Reparations, but He von Rosenberg, to whom he submitted the intervie before publication, shook his head with misgiving ov what he considered to be such far-reaching declar tions, and finally cut out the last and most importa passage. However, even in that form, the intervie was enough to attract attention to Stresemann abroa In the middle of April the *Manchester Guardian* pu lished an article in which it was stated that Stresema had entered upon the inheritance of governme during the Cabinet's lifetime; that he shone with t

radiance of the future Chancellorship, which he would assume as soon as the soap-bubbles of popularity had burst on Cuno's sleek pate.

"Are you out of your mind?" cried Stresemann to the correspondent who had written the article; "how on earth can you make such prophecies? You know perfectly well that in such a situation the formation of a Government would never by any manner of means be entrusted to me. You will ruin your reputation with your paper." He proved in a certain sense correct. In Germany the article aroused much comment and amusement. The situation called for "a strong man" with the full courage of responsibility, who would not shrink before the danger of grave unpopularity, and no one seemed less suited to the position than the opportunist politician Stresemann.

In his own party the opposition to him gained ground. The tension between Stinnes and "his young man" grew daily more acute. Early in February Stresemann had published in *Die Zeit* an article entitled "Politics and Industry," which gave great offence to Stinnes, for in it he spoke of the primacy of politics, and summed up his remarks in the following observation: "German industry should not be regarded as an end in itself, but as a means to an end. The old apophthegm—*navigare necesse est, vivere non necesse est*, means, when translated into the German of to-day: "The Empire and the people must be preserved, but individualist industry need not survive." What! Did this windbag who, like his whole party, owed his existence to Stinnes, dare to revolt against the uncrowned king of Germany? He, whom

Stinnes could crush with his little finger—was he so insolent as to treat his master with open contempt? Not so long ago, at a large reception, when Stinnes remarked that he had written a letter to the Government, Stresemann caught him up with a laugh and said: "A Note, Herr Stinnes, not a letter." "How do you mean—a Note?" asked Hugo Stinnes, with a lift of the bushy brows above those piercing eyes. "Great Powers communicate by means of Notes, not letters," observed Stresemann composedly, and only a twinkle deep down in his light blue eyes betrayed his amusement.

Notwithstanding the notorious deterioration in the relations between the two men, Stresemann, in an unexpected and undefined way, became a confederate of Hugo Stinnes. The Government's inactivity began to get on the great man's nerves as well, and ultimately there were stormy passages between him and Cuno. When he failed to induce the Government to open up the way to negotiations, Stinnes decided to attack the problem on his own behalf. One day early in April, Professor Haguenin was found to have disappeared; he had gone away overnight, and even his faithful secretary did not know his whereabouts. While the French in Berlin slunk about the city, and found the houses of even convinced pacifists closed against them, Haguenin was a guest at Stinnes' country estate near Mülheim. No pains were taken to keep the Frenchman's presence a secret; only for their interminable interviews, which were prolonged over three days, did Stinnes shut himself in his study with Haguenin. The business to which the almighty ruler of Germany's commercial destiny devoted so much of his valuable

time, was indeed of no small importance; the joke about the exchange of Notes between Great Powers went nearer the mark than Stresemann could have guessed. Stinnes had worked out a Reparations scheme which he wanted Haguenin to lay before Poincaré. The point of interest in the scheme, which the two men proceeded to examine in all its details, was the idea of using German deliveries in kind for a large-scale exploitation of the French colonies. Stinnes offered to take a sort of tenancy of the French colonial Empire. But years were to pass before France was to grasp the idea of using German labour and German products to open up the huge reserves of the French colonial possessions. At that period of embittered rivalry between the debtor Germany and the Allies who suspected they were being robbed of the fruits of victory, many schemes were in the air, and proposals for co-operation between French and German industry assumed many forms. But here, for the first time, the factor of colonial exploitation was examined, and the broad outlines of a scheme were worked out as a practical possibility. Interesting also was the presupposition from which Stinnes set out—the recognition of the industrial commitments of Europe, its dependence on raw materials that involved an industrial vassalage to other continents. It was not until many years later that such speculations were again to the fore, but those who put them forward little suspected that there had once been a man with almost legendary power, a man decried as a bitter and irreconcileable enemy of France, who, at a time when the hatred of France stirred the most placid citizen to a lust for battle, had negotiated at his country house

with the official representative of France, and worked out a gigantic plan of industrial co-operation between the two countries outside Europe.

Stresemann had talked about the primacy of politics; Stinnes' confession of faith was the primacy of industry. He, the most uncompromising of the German negotiators, the breaker of international conferences, the man whose answer was always, No! the bitter enemy of any fulfilment of the treaty, had, under the pressure of commercial necessity, changed his standpoint overnight—and he it was who, at a time of general helplessness, had the courage to give practical expression to his views.

But the grand spectacle of the conversion of Saul to Paul was to be withheld from the world. An emissary of Haguenin went to Paris to submit the scheme to Poincaré and ask him to grant Stinnes a long interview. In the meantime, however—it was now the middle of April—the utter failure of the Ruhr occupation had been transformed into a half-success, the artificially supported mark collapsed, and the psychological moment had passed; all that was left was the vast bitterness of Poincaré. He did not even deign to consider the scheme seriously. "Is Herr Stinnes instructed by his Government?" he said curtly to Haguenin's envoy. Stinnes—instructed by his Government! Stinnes, who was more than any government, the only real ruler of Germany. The envoy, who belonged to one of Stinnes' spheres of power, was somewhat taken aback, and replied: "Not exactly instructed, but . . ." "Then be good enough to tell Herr Stinnes that I only negotiate with official representatives of the German Reich."

That was the end of the interview, of the suggested negotiations, and of Stinnes' efforts.

The misery of the Ruhr, the death dance of inflation went steadily on. Passive resistance in the Ruhr had passed its zenith; a period of slow disintegration and decline began. The popular despair expressed itself in spasmodic acts of sabotage, such as the blowing up of railway lines, and in the formation of a Black Militia and irregular bands of marauders, but these were only the convulsions of fever, the backbone of the resistance was broken. Months went by, long months in which the structure of social and individual existence was destroyed. The mark crashed; a fortune of to-day was worth nothing to-morrow. Every object of daily usage acquired an almost mythical value; to-day it could be obtained, to-morrow it might be beyond reach. All ideas were in liquidation, all values were dislocated; it was as though the earth had opened in an earthquake and swallowed up life and property. A cloud of madness slowly gathered over Germany, and the atmosphere became like that of epochs ravaged by the plague.

Old people, *rentiers*, those living on pensions or on the proceeds of gilt-edged securities, millionaires of yesterday, were swept away by the headlong collapse of the mark, and died an uncomplaining and heroic death. Young men were maddened by the frenzy of inflation, made fortunes in a few hours, kept out of prison by the skin of their teeth, begged at street corners, drove taxicabs by night, and then, next day, were carried up to the heights again on a wind of happy chance—a truck of cheese, or boots and shoes—and rejoined the privileged ranks of the frequenters of

the Hotel Adlon. A wave of migration swept over Germany. Every sort of person who had fled from Russia before the Red Terror seemed to have sought refuge in Berlin. Here life was possible for anyone who had brought some securities, or had family jewels to sell, or possessed a pair of skilful hands. Men who had themselves been flung out of the customary course of their existence, and whom the caprice of fate had thrown together, found themselves most at ease in a tottering world. Along the Kurfürstendamm there was a positive chain of Russian night-restaurants. Russian generals carried in plates of smoking bortch, a prince conducted a choir in which gypsies sat side by side with ex-ladies-in-waiting, a princess opened a tailor's salon, counts, genuine and otherwise, bought goods that they had never seen and sold them, still unseen, at an enormous profit. In the austere apartments of privy councillors romped hordes of screaming children, every pension was full of refugees, conspiring, drinking all night long, weeping and dancing, frantically fighting for a livelihood, only to spend the next night on the street. Jews from many lands, Poles, Czechoslovaks, and Dutchmen, crowded into Berlin on the heels of the faithful servants of the Tsar. Engulfed in this foreign invasion, the city itself with its buildings and gardens, its factories and shops, seemed to have disappeared. A house was to be bought for a handful of dollars, and a magnificent mansion for a few pounds sterling, but reckoning the transaction in marks the profit amounted to several milliards. And people went on selling, many from the direst need, and many because their faith in the mark was yet not quite dead

and they only surrendered it with their last breath. The clearance sale of Germany steadily proceeded. Outside the food-shops stood interminable queues; into the soup-kitchens swarmed professors, officials, officers' widows, side by side with shop-assistants, labourers, and prostitutes; from time to time there were outbreaks of disorder, bakers' vans were seized and looted, but there was no rioting, no revolution, no mass-outbreak of madness.

More determinedly than in the trenches, or during the starvation of the war years, the German people withstood the test of their patience, power of resistance, and adaptability. While Germany's most tragic hour was thus drawn out, a few helpless men tinkered vainly at the dislocated machine of State. Any currency reform was useless so long as the resistance in the Ruhr had to be financed from the empty coffers of the State. The leadership of the nation had imperceptibly slipped from the grasp of Cuno, Rosenberg and Hermes; they were like helpless steersmen in a storm who still maintained the semblance of a course. By all parties, with the exception of the extreme Right, the Government was urged to come forward with proposals and so put an end to an impossible state of affairs. But such domestic pressure was not enough to stir the Government from its paralysed impotence. The sensation caused by Curzon's speech of 20th April, with its plain suggestion that Germany should make a new Reparations offer, was needed before the Government could be induced to enter upon fresh negotiations.

The Government consulted with the party leaders before dispatching the Note of May 2nd, but would

not listen to their objections or suggestions. Moreover, in those decisive days, Lord d'Abernon, their guardian-angel, kept away from the Wilhelmstrasse, as he had received explicit instructions from his Government not to undertake any responsibility for the German proposals.

Under these circumstances, a document was produced, the deplorable effect of which could hardly have been surpassed. The " strong men " of the Government thought it necessary, at a time when the costly maintenance of the mark exchange had already begun to fail of its effect, and the Ruhr policy had begun to reap its first successes, solemnly to announce at the outset of their Note that passive resistance would not cease until the Ruhr area had been completely evacuated. Apart from the hopelessness of such a demand, by this pronouncement, passive resistance, which had hitherto been represented as a spontaneous motion of the German people, was degraded into an instrument that the Government could manipulate at its will. In the purely technical part of the Note, an attempt, and an amazingly clumsy attempt, was made to bring off the same jugglery, in an aggravated form, that Simons had tried once before in London. The total figure of proposed payments was so disguised and qualified out of consideration for opinion in Germany, that the sum of thirty milliards of marks, already offered in London, now seemed much less than before. The principle of every seller, to make his offer seem as attractive as possible, was here reversed ; from fear of political repercussions at home, the actual total was so trimmed about that it began to seem unworthy of consideration. The first active step of the Cuno-

Rosenberg Government was more disastrous than its previous inactivity.

Herr von Rosenberg saw, with helpless astonishment, his Note mercilessly annihilated by bitter and unanimous criticism abroad. The idea of resignation was seriously discussed between him and Cuno. But the illusion of the first great hour was too deeply rooted in the minds of these two simple and honourable men. They both felt that Providence had placed them at their posts, and believed that their steadfastness was Germany's sole salvation. They bent their heads resignedly to the storm, for they looked on themselves as the one frail barrier between Germany and chaos.

In the meantime, chaos had indeed burst over Germany. All the forces of political stability were gathered to meet the intolerable strain. The nominal holders of power still sat in the Wilhelmstrasse, while a few houses away, in a modest study in the Neue Wilhelmstrasse, the threads were finding their way into the hands of Gustav Stresemann.

The formation of the great coalition had already been a matter of negotiation for some time; in those weeks of despair it came into actual existence. Gustav Stresemann on the one side, and Rudolf Hilferding on the other, represented the two wing parties of the now imminent coalition Government. Small misunderstandings and merely tactical demands were smoothed away by the exigencies of the moment. A Cabinet was silently formed; a Government that really gave expression to the will of the people, that might be depended on to act, waited in the antichamber until Cuno and Rosenberg made way for it.

The as yet non-existent Stresemann-Raumer-Hilferding Cabinet sent the second Reparations memorandum that was nominally signed by Cuno-Rosenberg, who now thankfully accepted any suggestion made by Stresemann and Hilferding, and put it forward as their own.

The impression made by the second Note was as favourable as that made by the first had been unfavourable. It was expected to resolve the great divergence between the Allies and put an end to the bitter conflict between Poincaré and Curzon. But in the meantime the world Powers continued their wrangle over prostrate Germany, a wrangle that was paid for out of the very heart of German trade, the very life-blood of the German people.

Poincaré sent the English Government a long indictment of Germany, a portentous document that constituted his *Credo*.

That was at the end of July.

The mark had passed the hundred thousand point. In the study on the Neue Wilhelmstrasse a restless man paced up and down. "Something must be done—something must be done." And he clenched his fists until the knuckles were quite white. "Capitulation means chaos," cried Herr von Rosenberg to the party leaders who described to him the wreck of German industry and the ruin of millions.

A murderer's bullet threatened every Government that dared to capitulate. In the Reichstag there was only one voice. Imaginary revolvers in the hands of those who murdered Erzberger, Gareis and Rathenau, held in check the policy of a whole nation, and kept the Cuno-Rosenberg Cabinet alive.

An early summer brought warmth and sunshine to the land. The Reichstag committee-rooms were stifling and sultry. The Deputies sat listless and unnerved, every man of them absorbed in his own bitter struggle for existence, many of them hungry, wearing frayed neckties and shiny suits, with the stamp of privation on their anxious faces.

"Is there nobody with the courage to take the responsibility?" cried one, in a voice that sounded as though it had been wrung from him by torture; and Stresemann's voice rapped out harshly in reply: "Certainly there is." "Responsibility?" asked another in the ensuing silence; "For what? What can anyone do while the last offer is still without an answer?" What indeed?

That was in the middle of July. The mark fell to 200,000.

Curzon sent the French Government an answer to Poincaré's song of hate which also contained a proposal for a common Allied reply to the German Note of 7th June. The abandonment of passive resistance was required by England also as a preliminary to any further negotiations. But even this advance could not induce Poincaré to put his signature to the Allied Note. The triumph of the Ruhr policy was now assured, and Poincaré was tasting the heady draught of victory. He refused England's suggestion of a renewal of negotiations.

Passive resistance in the Ruhr was now only an illusion, still despairingly cherished in Germany, and Poincaré had taken its measure.

The State machine still functioned for a while, like a clock that goes on persistently ticking in a burning

house. On 8th August the mark fell to 500,000. The Cabinet, like the embalmed body of Robert Guiscard, maintained an appearance of life, until the question that hovered on the lips of all who knew the circumstances, found expression in *Germania*. "How long?" was the title of an article that everybody read and talked about, and made that decorous organ of the Centre the sensation of the day.

How long would the Cuno-Rosenberg Cabinet survive? This question was, however, a little too pointed not to provoke a reaction. While Cuno and Rosenberg were seeking a dignified method of retirement, a lightning flash from the world of foreign affairs made even this impossible. On 11th August Curzon's second Note was addressed to France and Belgium—that Note which constituted a settlement of Allied differences, and pitilessly revealed the cleavage between French and English policy that it had cost so much labour to close. But in this Note it was also stated that England had repeatedly urged the German Government to abandon passive resistance, but that the German Government had paid no attention to these warnings.

Until the last moment the Cuno-Rosenberg Cabinet had clung to the illusion of Anglo-Saxon support; the last pretext for its existence was now removed.

On 12th August the Cabinet resigned. Twenty-four hours later the great coalition, that had been constructed months before, came into power.

Gustav Stresemann, as Imperial Chancellor, took over the administration of a bankrupt German Republic.

VI

THE GOLGOTHA OF POWER

13TH AUGUST. Superstitious people prophesied utter disaster for a Government formed on so ominous a day at so desperate a time. Stresemann was himself subject to superstitions that arose from a strange conjunction of natural timorousness with vestiges of popular beliefs in signs and warnings.

He believed, for example, that certain people brought him luck and others ill-luck; he was convinced that one person was an infallible mascot, and that he would be ill as soon as another came into the house. He avoided speaking of his schemes and hopes, from fear that they might not be realised, and he would allow himself to be influenced by the most trifling incidents which he regarded as good or bad omens. He also believed in the significance of the thirteenth of the month, but not as commonly understood. "Do you know that the thirteenth is my lucky day?" he whispered on that very 13th of August to a friend whom he regarded as especially propitious. "I passed all my most important examinations on a 13th, and all the lucky chances of my life fell on the 13th too. It is a good omen that my Cabinet came into existence on that day."

Gustav Stresemann went down to the Chancellor's office in a mood of unconquerable optimism. "Do you realise what you are in for?" asked his son,

looking dubiously at his father who was striding up and down the great gloomy official apartment with his hands clasped behind his back. "If I did not realise it," was Stresemann's answer, "I should not feel so cheerful; I was not meant to hold a sinecure. But don't you worry; all will be well."

And yet the popular belief in the unlucky number was to be justified against Stresemann's private superstition.

From the very first the new Chancellor was involved in a vortex of people and events, of claims and responsibilities, misfortunes and misunderstandings, that would have completely crushed a less resilient character. Since the former Radziwill Palace in the Wilhelmstrasse had served as the Chancellor's official residence, that peaceful house had never known such an invasion; it was quite beyond the capacity of that decorous establishment and its staff of dignified servants. All the journalists in Berlin, all the representatives of great foreign newspapers, were suddenly on the spot, just as in times when some great sensation was in the air. Politicians and industrial magnates, party officials, colleagues of his later years, friends of his early youth, suddenly demanded interviews of the new Chancellor, appeared with schemes and advice, with requests and offers of help, or merely with the intention of reminding him of their existence. Everyone felt dimly that here was no mere symbol of office, but a man who could take decisions, and all felt it to be their duty to do their best to help him and keep him well informed, or simply to be near at hand when great events were taking place. The cloistered peace of those reception rooms was rudely shattered. The

austere and scanty furniture with its upholstery of worn silk breathed a frosty chill, the whole house smelt of emptiness, desolation and stale air; in the tarnished mirrors the reflections of the visitors appeared like ghostly shadows. The old rheumatic servants flitted through the rooms like frightened owls, produced coat-hangers and hat-stands from all corners of the house, until one of the more ingenious had the idea of erecting a sort of rough wooden scaffolding in the magnificent entrance hall.

The sacred routine of official life was completely destroyed. The Councillor of Embassy who was thrust on the Chancellor in the capacity of secretary, collapsed under the unaccustomed labours, his tall figure grew quite round-shouldered under his burden of perplexity, and the only means he knew of dealing with the invasion of visitors was to put them all off, irrespective of their identity and importance, with the evasions that diplomats are trained to invent. Many went away offended and annoyed, but those who knew their way about departed in search of the faithful colleagues that the Doctor had brought with him from the Neue Wilhelmstrasse. In a small room they found his private secretary, Henry Bernhard, waiting in a haze of cigarette smoke until the elegant councillor had done enough mischief and he was called in to clear up the confusion. They then sought assistance from Fräulein Dommisch who was so accurately acquainted with Stresemann's attitude to his visitors, welcome or otherwise, and finally discovered her behind a gigantic screen where she always withdrew in dudgeon after a personal conflict with bureaucracy.

In the Chancellor's private apartments the chaos was no less. For years no woman had entered them; Wirth had been a bachelor, Frau Cuno had never torn herself finally from her Hamburg home, and only used—and that not very often—the reception saloons. Frau Stresemann wrung her hands over the bare neglected-looking rooms, and lamented the comfort of her homely house. The beautiful fastidious creature, who was later to be accounted so ambitious, in those days felt nothing but regret for the shattered peace of home. She took not the smallest pleasure in her position and influence, from which, indeed, she had always inwardly recoiled. When, a short time before, someone had spoken to her of Stresemann's appointment as a probability, she interrupted quite angrily: "Oh don't — it only means endless worry." And to an astonished friend who asked whether so great a position gave her no pleasure, she said, with a rueful twist of her pretty mouth: "Ah no, I shall have to give receptions, invite people to meals, and never be able to lie down after lunch." Perhaps in her woman's heart she felt, with the marvellous instinctive certitude that was always hers, that all the appearance of advancement, all the outward splendour of great position, could not replace what she was called upon to surrender in its place. She felt—vaguely and unconsciously—that the allurement of power was to deprive her of her happiness as a woman. "Now we shall never see you," was her first reaction to the news of the appointment.

In those days it lay like a cloud over the whole family. The elder son, Wolfgang, who felt the almost unendurable tension in all his sensitive nerves,

went about looking pale and anxious. Only one of them preserved his composure and his disarming smile; Gustav Stresemann himself. The impatience that had burned within him for many months, was transformed into a feeling that every minute must be used, and that time was infinitely precious; and his first experiences only served to deepen this feeling. Scarcely had he been a few days in office when he had to receive a deputation from the Ruhr, headed by Jarres, who had come to make clear to him the desperate situation in that province. The occasion bore an ominous resemblance to the conferences with Payer in the autumn of 1918, when the Supreme Army Command informed the appalled party leaders that the front had collapsed. After the defeat in the world war came the defeat in the war of the Ruhr. But this defeat did not come to one unprepared to meet it. A resolute man was there, fully conscious of the burden of his responsibility, his nerves at full stretch, an embodiment of a will that would not shrink from action. "How long can we still hold out?" he merely asked. "At the most, a fortnight," was the answer.

A fortnight—time had indeed become infinitely precious.

His brain worked with feverish activity. He reflected on all the possibilities of the situation, and sought some means of avoiding an open surrender. His first thought was England. The Curzon Note seemed not unpromising in this connection. Could England be induced to put pressure on France to wring at least an appearance of concessions from Poincaré? He caused unofficial enquiries to be made

for him in England. The answer sounded in the highest degree discouraging. The relations between France and England were so precarious, that any fresh move by the English Government must lead to an open breach. It was intimated to the German Government that passive resistance must first be abandoned, this suggestion being accompanied by the highly indignant reproach that Germany had been repeatedly advised to give up this policy while it still had some value as an object of negotiation, but the German Government had " foolishly postponed "—such was the undiplomatic expression used—what was inevitable. This way was therefore closed. There was nothing for it but a Canossa journey to Paris. Should he entrust this duty to the German Chargé d'Affaires, Herr von Hoesch? Or should he send a special envoy of the Government? He had only a fortnight—it was a prospect that tested even Stresemann's courage.

At a moment when his energy seemed a little shaken, when he was sitting alone in his study with his head buried in his hands, in a mood of infinite bitterness, a letter was handed to him; it was from Professor Haguenin, written from a sanatorium where he had taken refuge to recover from a complete breakdown in health.

The Frenchman, who had been one of the first to convert Stresemann to a policy of conciliation, expressed his great satisfaction at the formation of the new Government, and said that he expected great things from the new men; and he added that if he could be of any use, he would gladly place himself at the disposal of the Cabinet. Stresemann's face

cleared; a sudden idea struck sparks in his mind. "Do you think he is really prepared to help us?" he asked the friend to whom the letter had been written. And upon receiving an affirmative answer, he added: "I have a feeling that Haguenin is ashamed of the policy of his countrymen, and wants to unburden himself of a sensation of impersonal guilt. Perhaps he would be ready to negotiate for us in Paris?" A telegram summoned Haguenin to Berlin. Then began days of feverish work. Haguenin offered to intervene personally with Poincaré; but he insisted on the German Government furnishing him with Reparations proposals which he could put forward in Paris. "We will go to the ultimate limits of our capacity to pay," said the Chancellor. He offered the French Government the abandonment of passive resistance on the basis of the English Note of 20th July. He expressed himself as ready to settle the Reparations question, and to place the whole of German industry under hypothecation for that purpose. Such a proceeding would, according to expert authority, yield a sum of 500 million gold marks. The payments could start at the beginning of 1924, as the draft decree which he would lay before the Reichstag, would be opposed only by the German National Party and the Communists. "We must make very great sacrifices if we are to alleviate the dreadful state of affairs in the Ruhr."—"I hope it is not too late, Herr Stresemann; I fear the time is past for getting any concessions out of Poincaré."

He knew it was too late; and Hilferding, who was working out the Reparations proposals in the Finance Ministry and warding off the onslaughts of

bureaucracy, knew it too. So did Hirsch, who had been brought in to draft the text of the offer and had carried on the negotiations with Haguenin. "There goes Haguenin to Paris with the dead child of passive resistance, trying to pretend it is a living object of negotiation," he said with bitter irony, as he saw the President of the Guarantee Committee off at the railway station.

It was a painful and a futile journey. Haguenin staked everything; he risked his own position, and drew down on himself the contempt of Poincaré who confronted him with the triumph of the Ruhr policy. But this mission was for him the expression of his faith in an idea, his loyalty to a principle, an acknowledgment, perhaps, of the confidence that had been placed in him. He did everything humanly possible to extort even a semblance of accommodation. Telegrams, telephone-conversations, couriers, flew between Paris and Berlin. He asked that the guarantees might be more precisely defined, suggested this or that clause, which was inserted after prolonged consultations in Berlin, pulled all the wires in Paris—and came back with his purpose unachieved.

Passive resistance had to be called off unconditionally. Poincaré would not abate one jot of his demands. The surrender must be signed as an act of surrender.

It was a broken man who left Paris. The intransigeance of conquest struck him more than the policy of force. "We don't understand how to conquer," he observed bitterly. "I am convinced that three or four times since the Armistice it was possible to find a remedy for the folly of the nations. But now all the old prejudices have come back and are in absolute

control. The nations are speaking a language for which there is no translation. They use different arguments, they have a different logic and a different conception of justice. No wonder that those who warn them, who listen for the future, have no success. Perhaps only individuals can cross the barriers between nation and nation—and must perish in the process. Perhaps there is no path that leads from one people to another. . . ." A man who stood at the end of his life's work and watched the wreck of his labours, gave up hope.

In the meantime another was found to make that work his own, and to give his life for it; and he was fated to see it accomplished—in spite of all the disappointments that awaited him.

Gustav Stresemann had taken years to extricate himself from a narrow and partial attitude and find a way to common action; for many years he found himself inprisoned in a circle of misconceived national interests, until a certain conversation made him give up an outworn policy and a political structure that had served its purpose. For months past this contact with the other nations had been maturing in his mind—but only weeks were needed to ripen his judgment to a point at which he grasped the idea of the State in its purest form.

After the failure of the Haguenin mission, Stresemann began his campaign in Germany, the fight for public opinion and for the soul of the Press. He was later to accomplish many great achievements but hardly one more masterly than this, which took him a fortnight. Slowly he brought the Press, into which a consciousness of victory after the model of Strese-

mann's former war policy, had been sternly hammered, to a realisation of defeat. The atmosphere of the bulletins from the Front, which had held the Press in an almost military subjection, was quite gradually dispelled. His profound knowledge of the journalistic mechanism, his carefully fostered relations with certain journalists, were of great assistance to him in those days.

Side by side with this campaign went on the fight for the Reichsmark. When the new Government was formed, the hopes of the country expressed themselves in a hurried rise of the mark from five to three millions. But this was only a breathing space in a last plunge to the abyss. The first financial measure of the new Finance Minister was the issue, on 14th August, of a dollar loan of 500 million gold marks. This was to be the first attempt at a return to a stable currency. In his efforts to create the gold mark, Hilferding met with two obstacles on which all his theoretical ability was wrecked. The first of them was the bureaucratic machine. In the Ministry of Finance, which was a stronghold of reaction, a campaign of respectful sabotage was instituted against the Socialist Minister. The staff politely carried out his instructions, bowed to his superior theoretical knowledge—and proceeded to bury him under an avalanche of work. The most ancient undischarged cases were routed out and decked with red labels to indicate urgency, the most complicated questions were suddenly found to need immediate solution, everyone in the Department seemed to be constantly asking for interviews with the Minister. Every other minute there was a knock at the door, and someone dashed into the room with the

ominous red label. The telephone bell rang unceasingly, and the routine offensive against the outsider set in all along the line.

Rudolf Hilferding was not the sort of man who could defend himself against this domestic conspiracy. His entire record, his origin, his race, disposed him to independence, to revolt, and to unquestioned leadership. At first a doctor in Vienna, then a political economist of extreme Socialistic leanings, a man of original ideas, who had mastered his subject and acquired that skill in dialectic that is so easily picked up in Vienna, he came to Berlin to teach his comrades how revolutions are made. His real knowledge, his natural intrepidity in calling existing institutions to account, his mastery of journalistic form, and his gift of eloquence soon brought him into the front ranks of the Independents, and later of the United Socialist Party. He was soon on the committee of the party, and marked out for office. He wielded an undisputed authority, which he owed partly to his knowledge of the technical intricacies of finance and currency questions, partly to his alertness, his wit, and his aptitude in coining the bitter and unforgettable phrase. His long unquestioned position of authority had accustomed him to an all too easy accomplishment of his purposes. The great social popularity that he enjoyed in Berlin, where his brilliant intellect found admirers in every drawing-room, became to Rudolf Hilferding, whom nature had endowed with a large capacity for enjoyment, a sort of spiritual Capua.

If the revolutionary had been faced with a real fight, all his acquired softness and laziness would have dropped from him, and he would have recaptured all

the hard and stirring quality of his early revolutionary days. If he had met with open opposition, he would have banged his fist on the table and knocked the officials' heads together. But this now rather portly personage with the broad white face and thick-lipped sensual mouth, was defeated by the unassailable courtesy that beset him. He had lost, too, much of his ruthless force in the long years of his absolute dominance over his party ; and only the most deadly ruthlessness could have overcome the second obstacle before him—in the person of the President of the Reichsbank. Havenstein was a symbol of the mischief that can be done by self-conscious honesty. A man of unquestioned integrity, an official of the old school, possessed of a sense of duty that he obeyed regardless of his own interests, stiffened in the framework of a mental outlook he had formed many years before, a man of great goodwill and formerly of great ability, he was, in that time of dislocation, like a survival from yesterday. The mark sank into a bottomless pit, but Havenstein's conception of the right financial policy remained unaltered. The foundations of industry were shaken by the earthquake of inflation, but Havenstein did not make the smallest change in his credit policy. In vain the Chancellor and the Finance Minister assailed him, in vain the English Ambassador cried out that such a man deserved to be hanged, in vain a storm was raised in the Press. Havenstein clung to the first article of his financial faith, which was only to grant credits on a gold basis. The independence of the Reichsbank, on which the Allies had insisted, proved disastrous for Europe, and Germany finally collapsed under Havenstein's policy. Ger-

many, the debtor, breathed her last financial breath. The mark dropped far below a hundred millions.

That was the middle of September. On 23rd September Stresemann officially announced the abandonment of passive resistance. The Government of the "great capitulation," as some cheap wit described it in the Reichstag, entered upon its way of tribulation. The Press had taken its cue; but for months past public opinion had been too stimulated to adapt itself readily to the realisation of defeat.

Stresemann was now to experience what it was like to be the object of the hatred and contempt of a whole people. On 3rd October the Cabinet resigned; Hilferding and Raumer, the Ministers of Finance and Labour, flung to the raging ocean of public opinion, fell with the falling mark, which was now rapidly reaching the billion point.

The Ministry was inevitably re-formed as a rump Cabinet, for no one could be found to take over that distressful heritage. On 6th October Stresemann appeared before the Reichstag—to submit to judgment for a lost battle. He walked slowly up to the speaker's tribune, his bowed shoulders gave him something of the air of a man walking to the scaffold. He was very pale, when he turned his face to the house, but his eyes looked steadily beyond the half-circle of turbulent deputies from which burst cries of "Shame!" There was a strange gravity in his gaze, and his voice had lost its trumpet tone—it came slowly and with difficulty, as though he had a confession to make.

It was indeed a confession that Gustav Stresemann made in that hour, an agonised confession that it cost

him much to make—wrung from him in those weeks of defeat.

He, such an accomplished master of all the tricks of dialectic, and of parliamentary tactics, did not attempt —indeed it would have been useless—to disguise the measure of his failure. It was the task of the Government, he said, to utilise the abandonment of passive resistance to improve Germany's relations with foreign countries. "This task is certainly not at an end; we have merely suffered a set-back." He then proceeded to explain clearly and in great detail why passive resistance had to be given up without any hope of alleviation or agreement. He faced unmoved the storm of hate that followed, the shouts that were hurled at him with strange unanimity from the benches of the Right and of the Communists. The whole bitterness within him burst forth in the exclamation: "The *Rheinisch-Westfälische Zeitung* says that the statesman who did this should be impeached; well, I say here and now that I am ready to defend what I have done before any tribunal you please."

After this brief outburst he went on with his address, which was in some sense a reckoning alike with the House and with his earlier self. "The courage needed to take the responsibility of abandoning passive resistance is perhaps more truly patriotic than the phrases in which it has been attacked. I was conscious at the time I took this step, as leader of a party whose policy is usually of quite a different colour, that in so doing I was not only risking the party's political future, but my own life. But what is it that the German people lacks? Courage to take responsibility."

With these words Stresemann climbed the first step to statesmanship. Much later, when at the height of his success, he once said in recollection of the bitterness of those hours: "The greatest courage that a man may be called upon sometimes to display, is the courage to face unpopularity—to know that one was right and could not have acted otherwise, and suddenly to find oneself alone, hated, abused, and slandered, wondering how one can withstand the error of a whole nation, and prove that the only person in the right was oneself—that is the most awful ordeal to which fate can subject a man."

In those days he was terribly burdened by this feeling of loneliness. He who was accustomed to the echo of the masses, felt most bitterly the severance from his friends and party colleagues, and the atmosphere of animosity that lay so heavily on his chest.

But fate drove him upwards to the heights. The man whose conversion to the Republic had only taken place a year before, had covered the ground so quickly that in that speech of October, which ranged over all his previous political existence, he was to find for himself the ultimate expression of his idea of the State. "We must get nearer to the State and away from parties, away from selfishness."

The House, deeply moved, was silent for a while; then came an outburst of applause from the Left. They had listened to a confession; Gustav Stresemann's solemn adjuration. He had turned away from his own party and his own personal destiny, and fixed his eyes upon the State.

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VII

FINIS GERMANIAE

It was the night of the 8th to the 9th of November. In the Chancellor's palace the telephone bell rang unceasingly. Stresemann had been hastily summoned from the Hotel Continental where he was dining that evening with Schacht. He was standing with the receiver in his hand listening to a voice half-inarticulate from excitement. All the colour had faded from his face. " A revolution has broken out in Munich. Hitler and Ludendorf have declared the Government deposed.—The Bavarians are marching on Berlin. . . " " Summon a Cabinet at once ; see that all the Ministers are here in an hour."

He gave a few more hurried instructions, and then rang up a friend to tell him the melancholy news. " Finis Germaniae," he shouted into the instrument, and his voice sounded terrible to the half-awakened listener.

So this was the end—thought Stresemann, alone in the great desolate house—Bavaria was separating from the Reich. In Saxony was Herr Zeigner, organising his Red State with the help of the Communists, and laughing at the decrees of the Imperial Government. In the Rhineland and the Palatinate, separatist movements were afoot in every nook and corner, and on the ruins of despair and misery attempts were being made to build up the illusion of a Rhenish republic. Not

only paid traitors were at work. A few days before, a financial magnate of the Rhineland had come to Stresemann and urged him to found an independent currency bank for the Rhine, to save what could be saved from the collapse of the mark. Stresemann had shown him the door, but the man had powerful forces behind him. Would not the Rhenish State be proclaimed on the morrow, following the Bavarian example? Would not Herr Zeigner seize the opportunity to break free? Again the telephone bell rang: "The proletarian Hundreds are mobilising in Saxony and preparing to attack Bavaria. Erhardt is on his way through Thuringia to Bavaria, to the help of Hitler and Ludendorf."

The frail structure of the Reich was cracking; to-morrow, perhaps, the whole work of the Iron Chancellor would be undone. He suddenly recollected a prophecy from the time when power seemed still so far off—the spring of 1923. "You will be Germany's greatest statesman after Bismarck," someone had said to him; he had laughed at the time, and shook his head irritably, for he did not like anything that sounded like irreverence to his heroes. But the words had stuck in some cranny of his superstitious soul, and—though he did not admit it to himself—survived. Again he laughed a loud, almost hysterical laugh. "The German Empire, founded by Bismarck, and destroyed under Stresemann. That will be the verdict of history. . . ."

The instrument again came to life—disaster was in that insistent shrilling bell.

"Kahr has put himself at the disposal of the Hitler-Ludendorf regime. General von Lossow has induced

his Reichswehr troops to take the oath to Bavaria. Goltz is collecting large numbers of volunteers in the neighbourhood of Berlin. The war-cry is: 'Wipe out the shame of the Ninth of November 1918 by another and a glorious Ninth.'"

The first cars were soon entering the courtyard. The night was damp and foggy, and a November wind felt like a damp rag against the skin. The headlights of the cars threw great pools of light on to the wet plaster, doors slammed, muffled forms hurried into the half-lit house, the Ministers—haled, many of them, from their beds—looked about them with sleepy eyes, their faces glimmering with a pale and ghostly light. In the excitement of the hour the servants had forgotten to turn on all the lights, and the great lamps shed a dismal glow from a few only of their electric bulbs; the soft whispers in the half-darkness filled the gigantic room with the oppressive atmosphere of a house in which someone has died; suddenly a door swung open and the gloom was lifted.

Stresemann's voice was clear and unrepressed. "Are we all here?" Flustered secretaries hurriedly counted the company; one Minister was absent and there was no answer from him on the telephone. "Perhaps he . . ." and an obsequious voice whispered into Stresemann's ear. "Call him up there then, we have no time to lose." "We are only waiting for General . . ." began one of his colleagues, when the door opened, and way was suddenly and almost instinctively made for the newcomer. General von Seeckt walked through the lines of apprehensive Ministers, tall, thin, wearing a tightly-fitting field-grey uniform, and betraying not a sign of the hasty summons that was so

clearly visible in all the others. Not a muscle quivered in that immovable face. The anxious and inquiring looks that met him were defeated by that stony mask. He chafed his thin hands together as though they were cold, and bowed stiffly and non-committally to all his colleagues. Did he not feel that in all those eyes that centred on him was written at large the question: Does he belong to us or to the others?

The man on whom the fate of Germany depended, had assumed with even more than usual intensity his well-known sphinx-like expression, so familiar on the Eastern front, as he disappeared into the council-chamber behind the short animated form of the President of the Reich. He dropped into his chair without a word, folded his arms across his chest; the light caught in the circle of his monocle made it look like a shield over his eye, while the other stared, blue and piercing, into the room. He merely bent his small head, lightly flecked with grey at the temples, a little forward to listen to the report on what had happened, which he did not interrupt with any question. The sound of Stresemann's voice had long since died away, and General von Seeckt was still silent. For the fraction of a minute he shut his expressionless eyes, and the others present were suddenly seized with the distracted notion that all their agitation, the fear that shook them, the anxiety for the morrow that tore their nerves, were feelings that did not touch him. The tension grew until it was almost unbearable. Had he really been silent for so long, or had the minutes drawn out into eternities? Ebert could endure it no longer; he jumped up and began to stride up and down the

room. There was a touch of hoarseness in his voice as he asked the question that hammered in every brain. " And the Reichswehr, Herr General, will they stick to the Reich or go over to Bavaria ? " Seeckt looked at the speaker ; a blue glint flashed into his eyes and was as quickly gone. " The Reichswehr will stick to me, Herr President." It was a ringing voice of command that clove the stillness, while his legs remained carelessly crossed in front of him and not a movement stirred the impassive form that leaned back in the chair. A vast sigh of relief followed that sharp utterance before the sound of it had passed into silence. The unity of the German Reich rested on those slim shoulders. But those sibylline words aroused a feeling of security that relieved them from their worst apprehensions.

When the session of the Cabinet was at an end, the fate of the German Reich lay in the hands of General von Seeckt. He had received plenary powers ; Comrade Ebert, son of the Revolution, first President under the new regime, had entrusted unlimited authority to this mysterious and impenetrable representative of the military principle. An hour of bitter need gave Germany a military dictator. Behind Hans von Seeckt's rigid sphinx-like brow lay the future of the Republic.

The man who was to keep a whole world on the alert for many months, who swayed the destinies of the German people for weal or woe, was in reality more naturally suited than his colleagues for the part of dictator on the European stage.

The victor of Gorlice, the man who was reputed to have won Mackensen's great victories in the East, was

in fact an outsider in the social sphere from which he came. In outward aspect, he had all the rigid characteristics of the Prussian military type, the slim figure, angular movements, imperious voice, and rigid neck—eternally stiff from the encirclement of a tunic collar. The vitreous eyes in the tanned face, the set lips parting in a rare smile to reveal fierce sharp teeth, the high narrow temples, the motionless tense muscle that ran like a hard incision from the masterful nose to the projecting chin—the whole face, to which the prominent cheek-bones gave a slightly Slav air, seemed a symbol of Prussianism, as visualised by the world in general. Then came the hands and flung the picture into confusion. Slender, long artist's hands, that slowly awoke in movement as the hands of a pianist unfold upon the keys, surprising hands that expressed everything that his face concealed and disguised—his rare and polished culture, his deep and genuine acquaintance with all the spiritual heritage of humanity, his passionate love of art, his delight in people and in life, in any manifestation of beauty in the world, and, with it all, the profound sadness of ultimate understanding.

The whole structure of his thought and speech—his pitiless clarity of mind, his quick and cutting wit, the way in which he formed his sentences, free from any conventional phrasing or the current coinage of metaphor, together with a slight infusion of foreign words which gave his sharp Prussian speech an unusual ring, distinguished him from the men with whom his profession and his wanderings from garrison to garrison brought him into contact. There he gradually learnt silence, he learnt obedience and self-effacement,

but in such a man, born as he was to command, the most silent acquiescence produced the effect of a very articulate protest.

He was always unpopular with his colleagues and commanding officers—plain soldiers cannot stand obvious superiority,—even the most intractable behaviour was preferable to that faint air of mockery that often quivered round the corners of his mouth; a breath of mystery always clung to him, and he was surrounded by a magic and impenetrable circle of respect. He, the most finished representative of his caste, lived in it as though he had been in a strange world. It was to be his fate to carry his own world about within him, and wherever he was sent, he always seemed a stranger to his environment. He brought his world intact into the Germany of the years that followed the Revolution. He, the silent frondeur of the old regime, remained in the new Germany the silent frondeur of succeeding governments. He saved what could be saved of the old Empire and carried it over into the new age. He tried to find a place, in the straitened world of defeat, for a concept that was the centre-point of his world—the principle of power. He was clever enough to read the signs of change. He was, perhaps, the only one of the German Generals who had really learnt the lesson of the war. He not merely went forward with the new technique and new methods, but he saw their effects in a far-distant future.

When he succeeded Reinhart, the first chief of the Reichswehr, and undertook the formation of the German Army within the narrow framework allowed by the Treaty of Versailles, not merely did he abandon, at the dictate of the victorious Powers, the idea of the

old army that had once been the pride of Germany, the idea of readiness for war by which Imperial Germany had fondly imagined she could hold the world in check; he followed a line that his knowledge told him was better adapted to an altered age.

The work carried out by General von Seeckt, quite unobtrusively, in the years immediately following the war, evolved into the completest surprise ever inflicted by a conquered State upon its conquerors. The similarity of his task to some examples of the kind in ancient times, could not have escaped this classically-educated General—indeed the instance of the famous wooden horse of Troy may well have come into his mind. When he set about collecting the wreckage of the power that had passed, he found himself confronted by chaos. Into the professional army prescribed for Germany by the military experts at Versailles, still immersed in an earlier age, crowded many dubious elements, such as are flung up to the surface in a time of turmoil. The thought of the forces of the Crown as the expression of the nation was so deeply rooted in the German people, that paid service seemed undignified and even contemptible. Only those, practically, who could find no place within the civic framework of the Republic, sought what they felt to be a shameful refuge in the ranks of the Reichswehr. Adventurers, mutinous soldiers who had become enamoured of power in the delirium of revolt, dulled products of the barracks who were lost in a world without drill, communists tempted by the dream of a Red army, everyone who had nothing to eat and did not know what to do, joined the Reichswehr. For the officers, representatives of a once privileged class, continuance

in so dishonoured a calling was a measure of desperation only justified by an iron concept of duty or a spirit of revenge.

Such was the material with which General von Seeckt had to deal. "Depoliticalisation" of the Reichswehr, was the cry of the Social Democrats, thinking of the Nationalist elements who did not conceal their hatred of the new regime; and the same demand was made by the Moderates who feared the disintegrating forces of Communism. It was indeed General von Seeckt's chief aim to depoliticalise the Reichswehr, but not to gratify the Left or the Moderate Democrats. He absolutely forbade any participation in political demonstrations, he ruthlessly punished any soldier who was drawn into the conflict of opinions that went on outside; indeed he cut off the Reichswehr, as a body, completely from the Germany that was convulsively taking shape. Carefully and deliberately he built up an organism, a power in the State, an instrument that should serve no party, but the concept of the State as he understood it, and thus, too, the concept of power in a then powerless State.

In times of confusion, limits that he himself had set were sometimes broken through. In times of Communist disorder there was a good deal of overt sympathy with the Nationalist organisations; in the conflict over Upper Silesia this feeling developed into a concerted plan of campaign, and during the occupation of the Ruhr the Black Reichswehr maintained a subterranean existence. "People do things in troubled times that they would not do in normal circumstances," observed General von Seeckt, on one occasion, when summing up those years. But in point of fact all this

was merely froth upon the surface. Subordinate elements, that could be easily shaken off, he was disposed to leave to their own dark purposes. He himself held aloof, throned unapproachably above the turmoil. When Chancellors with open inclinations towards the Left received a man like Rossbach, or negotiated with notorious malcontents of the Right, Seeckt would have no dealings with these compromising personages. When the Feme murder trial revived the old bad times, Seeckt was one of the few who could say with a good conscience that he knew none of the wire-pullers behind the tragedies.

There were times when he, the soldier *par excellence*, was called upon to address his civilian colleagues on foreign politics. When the Upper Silesian revolt broke out, one of the Ministers proposed to send a force of Reichswehr to Silesia. General von Seeckt was asked what he thought strategically of such a move. To this precise question Seeckt gave a precise reply. He gave a brief and comprehensive description of the development of such a stroke, detailed the subsequent conflict with the Polish army which would rush to the help of the insurgents, and, at the close of his observations, pointed out that, as was common knowledge, Poland had a military convention with France, and that it would also be necessary to reckon with the intervention of the French army. This last remark, which reduced to absurdity the idea of any official action on the part of the Reichswehr, was stamped with the curt irony with which Seeckt rejected lay interference.

The strained relations between him and his Reichswehr Minister were an open secret. Seeckt, who

during the war had been regarded by the military authorities as an exponent of the new age, seemed to the democratic Reichswehr Minister to be the champion of the aristocratic military principle. He met the easy-going informality of the Bavarian with all the rigidity of Prussianism. The more earnestly Gessler tried to penetrate into a sphere in which he was a stranger, the more he found all the doors shut against him. Perhaps it was simply a matter of nerves that made the cultivated aristocrat, the punctilious officer, recoil before the conscious coarseness of Gessler's manners, or perhaps the reasons for the estrangement lay deeper; in any case, they were one day to be the cause of Seeckt's fall from the very peak of his power.

But by that time his work was done. He had completed it without the smallest violation of Germany's treaty obligations, and under the eyes of an extensive military Commission of Control. While the Commission was carefully searching warehouses and cellars, while they were digging for buried weapons, quarrelling with recalcitrant officers, and carrying on an elaborate exchange of Notes about trifling derelictions, Seeckt, in open daylight, built up a weapon of the future—the professional army of future wars, and a modern military technique. The experts at Versailles, who thought to create a force that would be powerless, presented Germany with an army of the future.

Hans von Seeckt was, however, not merely a modern Clausewitz or Moltke, he was also a *realpolitiker* of the school of Bismarck. History had never made a path so easy for any dictator as for Seeckt in those November days of 1923. He did not need to stage a march on Rome, he did not need to advance like Pilsudski upon a

trembling capital ; unlike Primo de Rivera and Kemal Pasha, he already had the actual power in his hands, entrusted to him by a Socialist Imperial Chancellor, conferred upon him—nay, thrust upon him—unanimously, by a Cabinet representing all shades of opinion. There were then no considerable forces which would have opposed a transition from a *de facto* dictatorship to a legalised *coup d'état*. And Hans von Seeckt loved power; he had come upon the world as a ruler, and all his life he had, more or less secretly, had his way. Why did he hesitate to reach out and seize the power that no one would have denied him ? Was this man, with the head of a war god, corroded by inner doubt, or had his inclination for the things of the spirit weakened his will to action ? The truth was that Hans von Seeckt was not primitive enough to assume that self-identification with the popular interest that must lie behind every dictatorship which is not merely a temporary expedient. He realised the international complications into which such a step would plunge his country ; he knew that the industrial structure of the German Empire was too elaborate to be brought under the forcible simplifications of a dictatorship, and also that the new State edifice was too young to stand so violent an experiment ; in a word, he reflected, while another in his place would have acted.

The most sinister personality in the German Republic, the great unknown, who in the eyes of foreign observers loomed like a nightmare on Germany's murky horizon, contented himself with saving the new State from dissolution.

That very same night of excitement he sent one of his trusted emissaries to Erhardt to warn him

against throwing in his lot with the Hitler-Ludendorf movement. Strict orders were issued to the Bavarian troops. But more effectual than anything he actually did was the fact that Seeckt had undertaken to protect the Republic. On the next day, Herr von Kahr, though he had joined Hitler and Ludendorf at an excited gathering in the "Löwenbräu" the evening before, returned to his allegiance, by no means in a penitential garment, but as the indignant victim of a levelled revolver.

But so distracted a country could not at once find its way back to normal conditions. Communist conflagrations broke out and were quenched in blood. Separatists occupied cities of the Rhineland and the Palatinate, mishandled the population, were ejected, and returned to the attack. In Saxony, the delirium of power turned Zeigner's head. The pale thin intellectual, with the refined and rather weak face, an art connoisseur and collector, the very type of cultivated revolutionary, had at first, in an anger of conviction, stood out against the betrayal of Socialist principles by the leaders of the German Revolution. All the malcontents of the Left, all disappointed pacifists, all the critics of a half-hearted policy, had gathered round Zeigner. The man who was later to disappear so tragicomically because he accepted the gift of a goose, for a time rose high in the German heaven as the exponent of an uncorrupted doctrine of the Left, as the champion of truth. But Zeigner "lacked the Marxian corset," as was said of him by another intellectual revolutionary, Paul Lewi. The man with the dreamy eyes was not born to be a tribune nor a dictator. He delivered himself over to the forces which, like a

sorcerer's apprentice, he had called up and could no longer lay to rest. The eye of Moscow watched over the Red flame that swept across Saxony as far as Brunswick and Thuringia. The Munich *Putsch*, that came to nothing, was an expression of discontent with the Empire, with the strong Jewish element in the Republic, and with Stresemann; and it left a smouldering fire that spread. From beyond the frontier the Red peoples joined together to advance against the military dominance of Berlin and against the betrayers of the Revolution. Revolts, hunger-riots, conflicts between proletarian Hundreds, broke out sporadically and foreboded an extensive Red conflagration.

The ferment of the Right and the disorders of the Left were really to be explained by the complete collapse of the foundations of industry. The strike against the mark had already begun some little while before. Officials, employés and workmen were paid in new sticky bundles of notes, but the peasants refused to surrender their products in exchange for these crackling bills with their illusory value, shopkeepers accumulated goods in their cellars, and the flight from the mark, which had begun in the higher strata of society, spread to the lowest. The mark only survived in the shadow of banks, exchange-agencies, cafés, and among the speculators of the street-corners. People had long since turned their backs on the mark and taken refuge in real values. But real values had now entirely parted from the mark, which had lost its last fraction of purchasing power. Count Westarp stated openly from the tribune in the Reichstag that no one could be expected to take this paper money in payment. The most uninstructed were no longer in any doubt as to

the necessity of a currency reform; there was, however, much bitter dispute as to the best method of return to a normal currency. Helfferich urged that the mark should be fixed on a gold basis, to be determined by the price of rye. Although his proposal was discounted by the fact that this basis was itself subject to oscillations of price, it was on the right lines in so far as it recognised that the stabilisation of the mark was primarily a psychological problem, that the important thing was to work on the popular imagination, —and he first thought of the agricultural classes, among whom the rejection of the mark had taken the crassest forms.

The destruction of the Empire, the collapse of the currency, the humiliation of surrender to superior force, the menace of famine in the ensuing winter—such were the prospects that opened before the Chancellor of the German Reich. He had indeed reached the abyss of his political fortunes.

The wavering support of his colleagues alone stood between him and the hatred of millions by whom he was regarded as an appointed victim. In that November of 1923 Gustav Stresemann could say with justice that he was the best hated man in the German Reich. The secretary of one of the parties of the Right subsequently disclosed that crowds of young men approached him daily, suggesting that they should begin to serve their country by murdering Stresemann.

The German people needed a scapegoat for its sufferings and found one in Stresemann. He was too remote from the working class, and too suspect as a servant of capitalism and a man of shifts and stratagems; and if in those days he had fallen by the hand of

a murderer, the mob would never have paraded the West of Berlin in an impressive silent procession of protest as they did when Rathenau was killed. His party colleagues abandoned him, and those who still appeared to support him really did so against their own convictions. He was soon to lose his last allies—the Social Democrats. The world could not have looked more comfortless than it did in those days to Gustav Stresemann.

And yet in those very weeks, when in spite of the complications of misfortune, he never gave up his feverish activity, he took a step which was to lead to a turning-point in Germany's destinies. On October he addressed a communication to the Reparations Commission in which he set forth Germany's incapacity to make Reparations payments. But this Note was not merely a negative *non possumus*; it was astutely linked with a suggestion thrown out by the American Secretary of State, Hughes, in the course of debate. In a form that displayed those gifts of happy phrasing that were later to be so much in evidence, he asked for an examination of Germany's capacity to pay. The German Note was preceded by a communication from the British Government addressed, at d'Abernon's suggestion, to her Allies, intended to elicit what would be their attitude to an examination of Germany's capacity to pay. The German proposal, in the form in which it reached the Reparations Commission, offered no sort of handle for rejection, nor any possibility of breaking the united Anglo-American front. But shortly before the anticipated fruits of success had had time to ripen, the final blow descended on that ill-fated Government.

The dispute between Saxony and the Imperial Government, that had long been looming in the distance, broke into open conflict, and Zeigner, at the instance of his Communist Ministers, declared his independence of the Imperial Executive. When Stresemann sent his old colleague Heinze as Imperial Commissary to Saxony, it was with the idea of sending an emissary rather than an avenger. In later days he never knew whether at that time, when he was so frequently betrayed, Heinze too may have deliberately misunderstood his instructions, or whether his temporary authority turned his head, and he so fancied himself in the rôle of dictator in his native city that he went far beyond Stresemann's intentions. In any case, the Zeigner Government was forcibly ejected, the Parliament house was occupied by troops, and the Reichswehr invaded Saxony to carry out a thorough re-establishment of order.

The invasion of Saxony proved too heavy a burden for Social Democracy; the great Coalition Government, formed in the hour of Germany's need, collapsed.

The Stresemann Cabinet was overthrown on 23rd November. The last day on which the Chancellor, who had already resigned, conducted official business, was to bring him a last bitter disappointment, and add yet another burden to those under which the German State was almost breaking down.

At the instance of leaders of German industry, the Government had instructed the representatives of the Ruhr industries to enter into direct negotiations with the authorities of the Occupation. The *Mission Interalliée de Contrôle des Usines et des Mines* laid down hard conditions. For a time there was a fruitless

interchange of proposals; the Government expressed its readiness to credit the deliveries of the Ruhr industries to the Micum, in case they were to be reckoned on the Reparations account. The agreement between heavy industry and the Micum was to be signed on 23rd November. The original conditions were scarcely modified at all. German industry, that had so long stood out against the huge total of Reparations claims, now made itself responsible for deliveries that went far beyond what had previously been demanded. As regards coal, in particular, the agreement provided for a delivery on the Reparations account that amounted to nearly 40 per cent. of the total marketable production. When the coal magnates, the so-called Committee of Six, became aware of the gravity of this responsibility, they came to Berlin to discuss the matter with the Chancellor.

In the Chancellor's palace reigned the same feverish activity that had accompanied Stresemann's whole period of office. Among a pell-mell of official conferences, inquisitive journalists, cases that called for a last-moment decision, agitated officials, sat a man almost engulfed in the final surges of work and laboriously trying to save his nerves from collapse.

At a moment when the black veils of exhaustion were sinking over his tired brain, and he had just got up from his writing-table to fling open the window, swaying like a drunken man, the visitors from the Ruhr were announced. The Secretary of State von Rheinbaben appeared, severe and immaculate, from his smooth fair hair to his glittering spats a very symbol of imperturbable elegance, and standing stiffly in the doorway, in contrast to his chief, who could hardly

hold himself upright, announced: "The gentlemen of the Coal Committee desire to speak to the Herr Chancellor."

"A Chancellor who has already resigned will be very little use to these gentlemen—tell them to apply to my successor, it can't be anything very urgent." Gustav Stresemann was not anxious to appear before Stinnes in the guise of a defeated man. Moreover he was sick of the eternal lamentations of the magnates of the Ruhr; it was for another than himself to deal with them now.

Herr von Rheinbaben conveyed the Chancellor's refusal, disguised in courteous phrases. Stresemann never heard a word of this decisive agreement; in high indignation his visitors went away and signed it.

The German commercial world was soon to follow the example of the heavy industries. Not merely politically but commercially the Ruhr war ended with a resounding victory for the Poincaré policy. With the capitulation of German industry his last day in office came to an end.

VIII

THE BREAKING DAWN

THE fallen Chancellor was suddenly enveloped in an all-pervading stillness. No more was he beset by swarms of visitors—all manner of people who wanted to give him advice or to ask him for an appointment, from ambassadors down to attachés, friends of former days and friends of yesterday. No buzzing telephones, no far-off tapping of typewriters, no alternating rhythms of hurrying feet across polished parquet floors and thick carpets, broke the silence in which Stresemann seemed to be listening to his inner self. The only sound was the tramp of the guard on the gravel paths in the garden—a warning that the man who was sitting above at his writing-table had to be protected against a possible outburst of murderous hatred.

For days the lonely man had carried within him the realisation of defeat; he had deliberately impressed it on his mind to harden himself against the allurements of self-deception. As he pondered on all the tangled disasters of those hundred days of office, he saw how all his schemes had given way under his hands. He had lost faith in himself, faith in his own capacity and strength.

Attempts to form a Government had been in pro-

gress for some days. Kardorff tried to construct a Cabinet and offered Stresemann the post of Foreign Minister. He had refused it; he felt himself absolved for ever, branded with failure, convicted finally of incapacity. In those days when he hammered into his brain the collapse of all his hopes, and forced himself to swallow the dark and bitter draught of disappointment, he was consumed, after his excess of work, by a sharp and terrifying sensation of loneliness, and the destruction of his confidence in his fellowmen deprived him of his last remains of strength. All the instruments he chose had failed him, all the friends that he had trusted without reserve, had betrayed him.

> " I never taught a man to shoot the bow
> That did not turn his arrows on myself."

he murmured bitterly.

The lines were on his lips in those days for the first time; he was often to find occasion to repeat them later on.

Until this turn in his career, his life had been a continuous outpouring of trust, an instinctive undistinguishing confidence bestowed on deserving and undeserving alike. Now he recoiled into disillusionment, and was never again capable of the same sort of self-surrender.

It is a fact that, with a few exceptions, Gustav Stresemann possessed few absolute friends—men or women, in other words, to whom he gave himself without reserve, to whom he was united by a community of feeling through all the vicissitudes of life, and who gave him in return the fanatical devotion that should surround every great leader.

And yet, for a man who had made such a career a his, he had the rare quality of never forgetting hi earlier connections, never disowning anyone wh belonged to his past; he carried them with him int his new life as naturally as though there had been n hiatus between yesterday and to-day.

There was, however, a distance between him and hi fellowmen, a distance rendered even more hard t explain by the fact that he was willing to lavish hi time on conversations, often threw caution to th winds and allowed himself to be drawn into observations that subsequently brought him enemies and trouble. People who met him for the first time felt as though they had achieved a friendship of years in a few minutes, and that they and they alone were admitted to the secrets of State, until at the next meeting they observed that they had to start at the very beginning once again.

This extraordinary alternation of familiarity and aloofness involved Stresemann in the charges of untrustworthiness and disloyalty which dogged him all his life. There was indeed an element of truth in this charge in so far as Stresemann's loyalty applied rather to causes than to men, and his trustworthiness was more clearly shown in his attitude to a great policy, than to party or personal obligations. People dimly felt that the object for which he was fighting, the way that lay before him, were so important, that he was at any time prepared to sacrifice his own feelings, that he was too completely dominated by his purpose, and that, for him, men were often no more than means to an end. And the world did not forgive him for this impression, any more than he ever entirely forgave the world for the

complete collapse of his faith during those November days. He was so sick of disappointment, so filled with amazement at the extent of human betrayal that he realised his inability to judge of human character. He was like one colour-blind who dares not try to distinguish between red and green. But as he was still compelled to confide in others, since there were in his nature no natural barriers of reserve, the result was this odd alternation of affability and aloofness, this transient gesture of fellowship, which, in the next moment and without sense or reason, was as suddenly withdrawn. Added to this, his extreme sensitiveness, the almost morbid susceptibility of his nerves, made him an utter solitary in the midst of all his manifold interests and claims.

There was practically only one human being who was able to penetrate this barrier that cut him off from his fellowmen, and that was his son Wolfgang. The precocious lad, in whose thin face—a legacy from his mother—his father's large loose mouth looked strange and out of place, was fully conscious from an early age of the responsibility of this admission to his father's confidence. He had inherited from his mother a clear and pitiless eye for character, an alert scepticism, which was, perhaps, somewhat too sharply accentuated as a corrective to his father's blind confidence. His was that odd one-sided maturity of artistically gifted personalities that combines a keenness of critical judgment with a very youthful sensitiveness.

The two boys owed it to their friendship with their young mother, by whose side they grew up like comrades, and to the absence of the barriers that rise so insurmountably between the two generations, that

in a time of revolt which dignified the father-son conflict into a symbol of development, they were enabled to grow up so straight in body and in soul, so untainted by that city in which any spiritual disorder finds an immediate response. They carried with them from that harmonious home so much assurance and reserve, that they were able to keep themselves unspoilt through all the stages of the family's advancement, and in spite of the destructive influences of insinuation and flattery.

Wolfgang, whose years of development coincided with the turning point in his father's career, shared with him all his vicissitudes, all the twists and turns of fortune, all the perplexities of great decisions. His son's company and criticism matured Stresemann's purposes; he needed a public—indeed, he was a living exemplification of Kleist's theory that thoughts are born of speech. He discussed all important questions with his son, sometimes as though he were talking to himself, sometimes to confirm his view by replying to objections, and sometimes, too, to borrow a weapon from the other side. As a result of these conversations the boy grew up fast, and acquired sharp eyes for the world, the coherence of events, and the continuity of history.

After those troublous November days Wolfgang was to become his father's almost sole confidant. He was to bear him company in the great change that took place in his relations to his fellowmen. He was with his father in that struggle, that bitter struggle with himself that Gustav Stresemann fought out in the week that followed the fall of his Government until the formation of the new Cabinet. In those days of doubt,

he whose very being brimmed over with faith and confidence, for the first and last time in his life, pleaded the cause of scepticism, despondency and refusal, and pleaded it with all the weapons of dialectic that he used to defend his optimism. All attempts to induce him to co-operate with the new Government were fruitless. After Kardorff came Stegerwald. Conference followed conference; he was offered one portfolio after another. But all efforts, dictated by party calculations, broke against his blank refusal. Moreover in his exhausted condition he had caught a chill which confined him to the house, and illness and enforced immobility plunged him even deeper into despondent isolation.

Then the true hour of decision struck, the hour that comes sometime in the life of every one, that flings the spiritless aside, and brings the brave man
turning of his fate. Two ways lay before him
that mood of shipwreck that then came over l
had not recovered himself—which, in his case,
the recovery of his unshakeable confidence—he
perhaps have remained in the background
political stage and possibly never have retur
power, like so many former Chancellors of the (
Empire who, branded by ill-success, linger
coulisses waiting for their hour to return.

But before the time of decision was past he
usual balanced self once more. When Wolfgar
back home one evening with the latest news th
had been entrusted with the formation of a (
" Ah, a very good man, Marx," he observed
excellent fellow ;" and in his voice was someth
a sound of capitulation.

After such an inner turmoil of despair, he, who on 13th August had maintained his optimism in the face of the bitterest reality, still sceptical and hesitating, entered the Marx Cabinet as Foreign Minister. And the very weeks that followed were to bring the crisis. On 30th November success came to him in so unobtrusive a guise that it hardly seemed a day of destiny in European politics. On that day the Reparations Commission consented to the formation of the two committees suggested by America—the first to deal with Germany's capacity to pay, and the second with the means to be adopted to prevent the flight of capital abroad.

For the first time since the withdrawal of the United States from the unlucky Wilson crusade for the salvation of democracy, America again stepped on to the European stage. She was represented, characteristically enough, by the homely figure of "Hell-Maria," as General Dawes was familiarly called in America, a name that will be forever associated with one of the most important compacts of post-war Europe. The powerful financial wire-pullers, Owen Young and Robinson, were his colleagues, and in the dim background loomed J. P. Morgan, Junior, but none of these was in the limelight; the General himself, a broad thick-set figure with his famous and inseparable pipe, came forth on to the world stage. He was only a general in name; his informal appearance and his casual manners conveyed a contempt for the rigid dignity of his European colleagues—and a hint that this impersonation of a soldier represented the military strength of a country that was convinced she had won the war for her Allies.

With the common-sense confidence of those who have no preconceived ideas, the Americans set about straightening out the tangle of European affairs. In the eyes of the men from overseas, insuperable difficulties shrank into very manageable problems. Much European irritation and resentment, much petty and inveterate national prejudice, was strained through the stout coarse-meshed net of their argumentation. Covered by the broad back of American responsibility, the haggling politicians of Europe were transmuted into impartial experts. Just as a schoolboy fight stops when a master comes on the scene, so the Reparations brawl ceased in the presence of the Americans. The United States won their first peaceful victory over a disunited Europe when they secured the adoption of their plan of Reparations Committees, and subsequently of the scheme that they devised.

While the " strong silent man " of America, behind whom, instead of the might of armies, stood the might of Morgan finance, captivated the imagination of the general public in Paris and Berlin, the unbelievable miracle of the mark took place in Germany. As to the paternity of the gold mark there is a difference of opinion which is never likely to be settled, but among those who claim it—Helfferich, Schacht, Luther, d'Abernon, and Hilferding—it was the British Ambassador who was the first to suggest the idea of a gold currency and laboured longest to make it acceptable to the public mind. Stresemann too was present at its birth, for without his intervention it would never have been possible to have secured the appointment of Schacht as President of the Reichsbank in the face of

the determined opposition of the great Berlin banks. He was in bed at the time with a sharp attack of influenza, and when he was urged by d'Abernon to take a hand in the negotiations, the letter that he dictated was so imperious and uncompromising that had he been in his usual health he would probably have expressed his views in milder terms; so fortuitous was the conception, and so marvellous the birth.

The greatest conjuring trick in the world took place in the space of a night. Notes that had been next to worthless the day before suddenly increased a billion times in value. Under the magic wand of a mysteriously re-awakened confidence, paper changed into pure gold. Modern alchemy had solved the problem that vainly tormented the Middle Ages.

The confidence in the mark grew from the same mysterious soil of popular psychology from which religions appear; possibly because the need of faith was so desperately urgent that the desire for belief took the place of reasons for it. The Rentenmark was the psychological acknowledgement of a complete change of attitude—it may perhaps be compared to a very sick man's will to live, when he emerges from a crisis and says to himself; I will—I must get well. The faith that removes mountains, the faith that Stresemann had so often evoked in times of extremity, had achieved the stabilisation of the mark. At one stroke the madness of inflation ceased and was replaced by the glorious sensation of a stabilised currency. The habituation, indeed, to enormous figures could not be shaken off in a day. Prices remained for a time at a dizzy height. Shopkeepers could not bring themselves to reckon with

fractions of a currency unit. It was two and three and five marks where before the war it would have been a matter of 45, 65, or 195 pfennigs. The fixation of prices was at first completely capricious and for a time made Germany one of the most expensive countries in the world.

The great migrations now set in once more, but in an opposite direction. Foreigners left Berlin in masses; first, the financial magnates of yesterday who dealt in bills of exchange and awoke to find themselves poor. Then the Russian exodus began. In a short time Berlin was rid of all foreigners, and the trades connected with them collapsed. German industry went through all the crises of stagnation, unemployment, and congestion. Many a dubious bank burst like a soap-bubble, and many prosperous-looking businesses came to a sad end. Then came the great reckoning with profiteers, exchange-speculators, and adventurers generally—the suppurating wounds in the body politic had to be cleansed before they could be healed. But the transition took place with astonishing speed, beyond the expectation of even the greatest optimists.

While the professional defeatists went about prophesying disaster, while those whom long experience had confirmed in their mistrust were sceptical of any improvement, and held that the enemies of the Republic and the Government could never be disarmed, there was one whose sensitive nerves felt the turn of fortune that was not far away. On 18th February, in a speech at Elberfeld, Gustav Stresemann coined his famous phrase " Silver streaks on the horizon " that gave rise to so much ridicule and controversy, and at every set-back was quoted in the Hugenberg newspapers with

contemptuous derision. And yet, from that time forward, there were always silver streaks on the German horizon, in spite of all the banks of cloud that sometimes obscured them for a while. In April the Dawes Committees of the Reparations Commission published the results of their labours.

German domestic politics took a turn for the better in response to the improvement in foreign relations. The Government parties, and more particularly the People's Party, whose moving spirit now began to reap the first fruits of his labour, paid much later on for the unpopularity which they owed to the errors of Stresemann's predecessors. Popular movements in Germany are so gradual and their effects so lingering, that the elections of 4th May, 1924, were held under the shadow of the Ruhr conflict, and were dominated by the gallant phrases and the echoed excitement of that time.

In France, the land of obdurate reaction, elections that were held a week later also brought an answer to the policy of the Ruhr.

The Cartel of the Left was victorious in the conflict. Poincaré was replaced by Herriot, just as in England the Conservatives were replaced by the Labour Party. A great revulsion was taking place in Europe; the silver streaks on the German horizon broadened. But the man who did his utmost to use every turn of events in his country's service—as he himself had said: "the point is whether you will co-operate in the great movements of world history or set yourselves against them"—was living under a cloud of mingled hatred, mistrust and suspicion. But as this feeling of hatred began to fade from the minds of the great masses of the

people, as the improved industrial position brought with it a clearer insight into the limits of political possibilities, the more vigorous and venomous were the attacks made upon him by his horde of enemies in the Reichstag and in the Press. His great speeches dwindled from statements on foreign affairs into wordy warfare with Helfferich or Graefe. Freytag-Loringhoven, from the tribunal of the Reichstag, accused him of being influenced by the fact that his father-in-law had an interest in a Czech arms factory. Once and once only when his former party colleague Dr. Quaatz interrupted him by shouting: "Are you arguing for the other side?" the harried, slandered man lost patience, the blood surged into his head, and his voice rang with indignation as he retorted: "That is the vilest accusation that can be brought against a Foreign Minister."

He was called to order for the first time in his Reichstag career, but the outburst relieved him —too much poison had been accumulating in his system.

Attacked as he was so bitterly by the Right, he tried to win the confidence of the Left. There was a comic song current in those days which ran: "Stresemann, der mal links kann und mal rechts kann[1];" and it was popular, for it summed up the charge of opportunism that seemed destined to haunt Stresemann for ever.

Only in the Cabinet did he at that time find the complete support that his country refused him. The first months of the Marx Government were for Stresemann the most unruffled in all his varied expe-

[1] Stresemann, who can turn to the Left or the Right.

rience of successive Chancellors and Finance Ministers. The Mayor of Essen, Dr. Luther, applied to the finances of the Empire all the administrative ability he had displayed so successfully in municipal affairs. A policy of severe economy led to astonishing results. The first balanced budget was to crown the miracle of the mark. Moreover with Marx, whom he regarded with a sort of indulgent affection, he was able to work more harmoniously than with any other Chancellor in the past or future. The summer months which, so far as foreign politics were concerned, were occupied with preparations for the London Conference, were for Stresemann the first period of relaxation he had been able to take since August 1923. All his optimism, energy, and faith in the future came back to him in those few weeks. With an almost boyish curiosity, as though in expectation of a great adventure, he went to the first International Conference that he had ever attended.

The procedure was new to him, the men were new to him, and so was the interplay of modern power.

He looked at the Mayor of Lyons with fresh inquisitive eyes; "He reminds me of Ebert without the beard," he said, after their first meeting, and as he was leaving Macdonald after their first encounter, he said meditatively: "Don't you think he's rather like Breitscheid?" There was a note of surprise in his voice that men should be so alike, and yet somehow different. But they were men from the same mould, with the same virtues and the same shortcomings. This experience carried him outside and beyond his usual self. And yet, too, he came back to his old self once

more, and resumed with zest his usual methods of conversations, interviews with journalists, and immediate personal contacts.

"The point about this Conference is, that the subject of it must not be discussed," he said with a laugh as he got into the train. And yet the subject—by which he meant the evacuation of the Ruhr—was, in fact, discussed, not officially indeed, but in private conversations, which were then for the first time found to be the best method of negotiation. He extracted an undertaking from the hesitating Herriot, whom a week-end at Chequers had lulled into a sense of complete security against sudden assaults. The cities of the Ruhr, occupied since the London ultimatum, and the Ruhr district occupied in 1923 were to be evacuated by 15th August, 1925; moreover Herriot promised that Dortmund should be evacuated immediately the Dawes Plan had been accepted by Germany. Stresemann had one inestimable characteristic in his ability to grasp the difficulties with which his adversary was confronted. He refused to follow the example of so many German negotiators by making a maximum demand and then agreeing on half the purchase price. He who had to contend with a half-hostile and half-indifferent Reichstag, never lost sight of Herriot's background—the French Chamber. He, too, was expected to bring back the maximum result.

The London Conference represented the first break with the methods of previous Conferences. The German envoys sat round the council table as equals. The good-humoured President of the Senate in his black frock-coat, with his fresh-coloured face and white hair, and a pleasant smile on his lips, was much

more appealing, much more "European" than Stresemann with his bald crown and short, creased neck, which so unfortunately resembled the current caricatures of the Boche. But his ability in negotiation, in spite of the difficulties of language, and the quickness of his intellect soon overcame this unfavourable impression.

Full of his new experiences, and convinced that he had obtained everything that, under the circumstances, was obtainable, and with the definite sense that matters had now been placed upon level ground from which the way must now lead upwards, he returned to Berlin and plunged into the conflict aroused by the Dawes laws.

He fought with all the strength of his convictions for this "Industrial Testament of the Americans," which he looked upon as one of the great turning-points of world-history; but more effective than all these political and industrial arguments, were his direct dealings with the various parties, his personal influence with Deputies, his bargains with the German Nationals, the display of all the parliamentary devices of which he was so accomplished a master.

When the voting day came no one could predict the result. In the Nationalist Press the campaign against the Dawes Plan raged unabated, but the leaders of the party did not want to burden themselves with the responsibility of rejection, and all the many consequences which it was then impossible to foresee; moreover, a promise that the Government would be extended in the direction of the Right, had no small influence on their attitude. The result of the vote depended on whether good sense or demagogy was to

prevail. Until the very last moment the party leaders enveloped themselves in a mysterious silence. The plenary session of the Reichstag seethed with suppressed excitement. As the parti-coloured tickets began to drop into the urns, all eyes were fixed on the Nationalist Deputies. The President of the Reichstag, the members of the Government, the throng of officials behind the Government benches, followed their movements with the tensest expectation. The onlookers in the galleries bent over the wooden balustrades and held their breath. "Hoetzsch has a Yes-ticket in his hand," said one, in a hoarse whisper; "But he's got a No-ticket in his left hand," said another, who thought his eyes were sharper.

Not until the result was announced did the house learn, with a consequent burst of laughter, the Nationalist vote had been exactly split; they had thus secured the adoption of the Law without violating the principle of opposition to the Plan. German parliamentary history was enriched by a novel specimen of political tactics, and it was long before the Nationalist Party could shake off the ridicule they incurred by this vote.

When the somewhat absurd episode was over—when the diplomatic struggle in London had been concluded by the far more intense domestic struggle in Germany, Stresemann gave himself the first real holiday of his Ministerial career. Like an exultant schoolboy he went off to Norderney. The Chancellor and the Head of the Press Section also took their well-earned leave, and only Ago von Maltzan, with a strange legacy of toil, remained behind in the desert of Berlin.

As far back as the London Conference the German

delegation had discussed among themselves whether they should not, under pressure from the parties of the Right, raise the question of war-guilt. They were advised, and rightly advised, not to do so; but when they had returned to Berlin, Marx sent a letter to Herriot and Macdonald at Geneva in which he prepared them for a Note on war-guilt, and set forth the grounds which had disposed the German Government to take this step.

In the negotiations over the Dawes vote, the disavowal of war-guilt was one of the items with which bargains were made. Marx promised the Nationalists that a memorandum which had been drawn up at the last session of the Cabinet and handed to the Secretary of State for communication to the Allies, should be duly despatched. This was one of the questions that lay closest to Stresemann's heart throughout his whole career. Most of the patriotic creed that he had defended with such vehemence during the war had crumbled in his hands; but the ardour of his own faith was a measure of the honest conviction of the justice of their cause with which the German people went into the war. The only survival of his attitude in those days was the conviction, which had all the force of an emotion, that the German people were innocent of the war.

Here was one of the bridges between the past and the future that the romantic in him was always trying to construct, although the representatives of the past continually demolished his work. Here was an excellent opportunity for a demonstration; and sentimental considerations prevailed over diplomatic mis-

givings, the more so as they were backed by the urgencies of party tactics.

Ago von Maltzan was not, however, one of those diplomatic postmen who blindly follow their instructions. Permanent Secretary of the Foreign Office for a number of years, progenitor of the Rapallo Treaty, he was perhaps one of the most singular men who ever held that position. In outward appearance he was a typical Mecklenburg Junker; a round skull on square shoulders, a heavy figure, prominent Slav cheek-bones, flat, rather slit-like eyes, and a tanned open-air face under its covering of reddish-brown hair. In character he was a diplomat of the school of Mazarin, Talleyrand and Metternich, a man of infinite pliancy, a master player with men, with that dangerous smoothness that was responsible for all the secret treaties of history. In normal times Ago von Maltzan would have been the successor of Prince Bülow, whom he resembled in his cosmopolitan culture, his uncanny adroitness, and his delight in subterranean methods. But a time of turmoil brought Ago von Maltzan to the front, and revealed a side of his character which would, perhaps, have been less noticeable in an age of undisturbed development.

The "Red Baron" carried within him a divided allegiance: he inclined both to an earlier and more solid world of feeling, tradition, and human relationship, and to an intellectual and revolutionary negation of existing and traditional institutions, to all that was commonly considered axiomatic.

He had no points of contact with average humanity. He could not think in commonplaces, or use the current coin of language, and any attempt on his

part to make advances to the people, to the great middle class, had the effect of an unwitting parody. He often found himself feeling envious of those who could think or speak openly from the nation's heart, for he often grew weary of continual disguise. A vast contempt for humanity was engendered by his inability to win the true confidence of any man, and this contempt sometimes had the effect of spoiling his diplomatic game. He esteemed people so lightly that no flattery seemed too gross, no exaggeration too shocking, to serve as a means to an end. Most people fall an easy prey to these tactics, but from time to time a victim would subsequently realise that he had been fooled—and never forgive Maltzan.

The relations between Maltzan and Stresemann very soon became strained. At the time when Herr von Rosenberg was still responsible for the conduct of Foreign Affairs, Ago von Maltzan was in constant contact with the chairman of the People's Party. He used to call upon him—often at an impossible time, in Stresemann's opinion—between eight and nine o'clock in the morning—at his house on the Tauentzienstrasse. He looked on him as the coming man, as Stresemann himself discovered indirectly in the following circumstances.

On one occasion, in the late summer of 1922 after some weeks of hard work, Stresemann went for a few days to Heligoland. Tired and listless, with a small bag in his hand, he walked down the narrow gangway from the boat. To his amazement he saw the mayor standing on the quay, accompanied by the local dignitaries, wearing a black frock-coat and an ancient top-hat, and with the tense appearance of a man about

to make a speech. He at once observed with bewilderment that this ceremonious reception was intended for him, and that these words about "great honour and distinction" were addressed to him and to no other.

This was the first time that the plain member of the Reichstag, Gustav Stresemann, had been received like a minister in office. He racked his brain to account for his respectful reception on the little island. When pressed, the mayor replied that Baron von Maltzan had informed them of Stresemann's arrival, and had added that he should be received with proper consideration as the future Chancellor of the German Reich.

During his first Chancellorship, when Stresemann was only nominally responsible for the Foreign Office, they found themselves in agreement over policy, as also in their determination not to be bound by bureaucratic methods. But revolutionary as Ago von Maltzan might be in comparison with his peers in officialdom, he produced quite the opposite effect in his relations with the Foreign Minister, who was soon no longer satisfied to deal with the broad outlines of policy, but wanted to interfere with the machinery of that sacred institution. On one occasion, at morning prayer, as it is called—the conference of higher officials that takes place the first thing every day—upon the announcement of the imminent Cabinet crisis and the probable departure of Stresemann, it had been possible for one of the Assistant Secretaries to say ironically: "I did not know he had been there." But that had long since been untrue.

Gustav Stresemann was very much there, and his

spontaneous, almost convulsive interference with this or that department filled the souls of those accustomed to unhindered continuity of work with horror. Ago von Maltzan contemplated him with a mixture of admiration and bewilderment. Here was a man who carried the masses with him, was not afraid of a rousing catch-phrase, sometimes gave away State secrets, told grey-haired diplomatists what he thought of them, and ultimately achieved the same result as had cost Maltzan so much elaborate ingenuity. The Minister and his Secretary of State became gradually estranged in their daily intercourse; and the matter of the war-guilt Note finally destroyed any possibility of harmony.

Maltzan, who had been officially entrusted with the despatch of the Note, simply did not send it. He felt that the diplomatic situation made such a step impossible. He knew that it would damage the international confidence created by the London Conference. Still, though he was convinced of being in the right, he was a little apprehensive of Stresemann's return, and, on the eve of his arrival, he secured the support of d'Abernon, who had also pointed out how futile and unfortunate it would be to take this step. When Stresemann had overcome his first indignation at the Secretary of State's high-handedness, he realised, and, a little later, admitted, that Maltzan had saved the German Cabinet from a diplomatic error. But a slight resentment still rankled in his mind, a regret for a cherished gesture that he had not made, annoyance at a broken promise, and, most of all, the fear that such an occurrence might be repeated. For two men, both of whom needed so much space and elbow-room, and whose activities were so comprehensive, the Foreign Office

was too small a place. Ago von Maltzan was soon to go to Washington, there, as he himself expressed it, "to be preserved in spirits."

. . . .

But he took with him the hopes of the parties of the Left, who looked upon him as Stresemann's presumptive successor, when the time should come. When he came back to Germany on leave in the summer of 1927, and one of the frequent Ministerial crises was looming on the horizon, representatives of the Left who were in opposition to Stresemann approached him with a view to offering him the portfolio of Foreign Affairs in the new Cabinet.

As prospective successor of the then Foreign Minister, Ago von Maltzan stepped into the aeroplane that was to carry him as fast as possible to see his pretty young wife and his beloved child. A few hours later, almost the only man who could have assumed Stresemann's inheritance, lay shattered on the ground.

A meaningless death closed an uncompleted life. One who might have developed into something like a great man, died before his time.

. . . .

The political sky, which had been so clear after the London Conference, the introduction of the Dawes Plan, and the Reparations armistice, was now darkened by a new cloud.

On 1st January the Cologne zone was to be evacuated by the British troops, assuming that the Military Commission declared that Germany's disarmament was complete. But there was dissension in the Military Commission. The Italian officers had discovered

fortified places on the Eastern frontier that contravened the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, the French representatives found stores of arms, factory constructions, etc., that were not in accordance with the idea of complete disarmament; the sole idea and purpose of the English was to turn their backs on Germany and her disturbing activities. But an evacuation of the Cologne zone was not possible before the final pronouncement of the Inter-Allied Commission. Several weeks before the appointed date it was being rumoured that the evacuation was to be postponed. A storm of indignation swept over Germany. The newspapers of the Right clamoured that Stresemann should apply the consequences of this breach of the Treaty of Versailles, and suspend all deliveries from Germany.

The bewildered Reichstag was caught once more in the throes of an election, and the Nationalist opposition now had to pay the price for its divided vote. Indignation proved a very fragile weapon.

The German middle class replied to the policy of agreement by a sharp turn towards the Right, again revealing how little headway this policy had really made. Divided counsels were to be found at the very heart of the Government. The idyllic days of harmonious co-operation between Stresemann and Marx had grown somewhat overcast since the London Conference. Stresemann had, indeed, somewhat reluctantly consented to accompany the Chancellor to London. He knew that the ambition of appearing on the European stage had not been roused in Marx's modest breast, but that someone else had induced him to go—someone who at that time presented the Chancellor's policy

to the world—the Head of the Press Department, Karl Spiecker. The young politician of the Centre, whom the Chancellor himself had appointed to this post, Karl Spiecker, " better known by the name of Wilhelm Marx " as a witty Secretary of State once observed, was driven more by circumstances, by the consequences of his own political evolution, than by his own will, into hostility to Stresemann.

For the first time since Stresemann had been in power he met a man of equal ability in the game of party politics, fully conversant with all the complicated elements that operate in the domestic affairs of Germany,—a man, too, who was greatly helped by his close association with so unimpeachable a character as Marx, and also by his capacity, which Stresemann himself lacked, of arousing confidence, discovering trustworthy friends, and grouping party constellations about his person. Spiecker's outward appearance also came to his aid in this process of winning confidence; but the appearance was, as with Stresemann, though in the opposite sense, deceptive. He looked at first sight as sincere, as Stresemann, to a superficial observer, seemed crafty and disingenuous. This man with his full comfortable figure, his fine brow and thick brown hair, and almost childlike mouth, wore his fresh and rosy aspect like a capital disguise. Those soft grey eyes of his sometimes lit up with a flash of pitiless insight, a look that pierced through all pretences, pretexts, and half-measures. His mild demeanour concealed an invisible but exhaustless energy, and his weak rounded chin a determination that knew no mercy. A true representative of the Centre, who in another and more settled time would have been a

militant son of the Church; indeed the force that lay behind that smile could well be pictured in a Bishop's violet robes. A time of disorder gave him another profession of faith in addition to the one he had inherited—a political religion. The Revolution came upon him in the placid pursuit of his official career as a Government servant; alert and observant, unburdened by traditions, he felt compelled to declare himself on the side of the new era. The new era was not, to him, represented by the November Socialism in which so many of the extremer revolutionaries found their spiritual home; indeed in those times of sudden swerve to the Left he would have passed as a reactionary, standing as he did for the steadying elements in the State, the consolidation of the new Republic on the basis of civic order. The greatest danger that threatened the young German Republic in the hour of its birth was a second wave of revolution which would not have been content with decorous and bloodless subversion, but, following the Russian example, would have uprooted and destroyed all existing institutions. The activity of the Spartacus League hung over Germany like a nightmare. All the unfermented spirit of revolt, all the desire for a final settlement left unsatisfied by the half-abortive revolution, all the fear lest the bad old days might come back into a world not yet completely cleansed, was kindled to a blaze by that flame of revolution—Rosa Luxemburg. A surge of Red fire burst forth from the depths of the people and enveloped the figures of the three leaders—Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht, and Paul Lewi. Spiecker took up the fight against this seething mass. For the abominable

"execution" of the leaders he bore no responsibility. His purpose was merely to uphold civic order, to damp down the smouldering rancour, and lead the turbulent elements back into normal paths. He had already broken the backbone of the movement, when bestial cowardice laid hands on unarmed victims and did not shrink from the murder of a helpless woman.

The agonised birth-throes of the German Republic left Karl Spiecker with one conviction; the surge of revolution was not to be stemmed by the men of yesterday, the pillars of the old order, but by the more thoughtful representatives of the workmen. Germany was saved from Bolshevism, not by the bourgoisie, nor by the pre-revolutionary class, but solely and only by the politically-minded Socialists. Out of this conviction grew Spiecker's loyalty to Social Democracy. All his later political activity was to be devoted to building a bridge between the workmen's representatives and the bourgoisie. Before he was generally known to the public he was called on to undertake another and highly disagreeable political adventure.

This man of subterranean methods, harmless to all appearance, but, in reality, infinitely ingenious, and prepared to use any means to serve his ends, seemed specially suited to carry on a dangerous propaganda on dangerous ground. In the thick of the plebiscite campaign in Upper Silesia, he was sent there as German Commissary. He used unpleasant methods in dealing with an unpleasant task; but after the defeat he was the first who, in opposition to the usual psychology of losers, stood out for the necessity of co-operation with the victors. The conflict had been fought out and Germany had lost; he laid down his

weapons, and instead of using his knowledge of inflammable material to fan the flame of fury against Poland, he appealed for an understanding with theii Eastern neighbours. At a time when the fading hatred of England and France now found an outlet only against Poland, when it was infinitely difficult even in the ranks of the Left, to find politicians who were prepared to defend an agreement with that country, Karl Spiecker placed himself at the disposal of the German-Polish Committee, just as after the Spartacus revolt had been finally brought down, he got into touch with the extremest elements of the Left, and established a firm friendship with the former Spartacus leader Paul Lewi.

When he took over the Press Department in 1923, being at that time a complete stranger to the field of foreign politics, the Press at once noticed that here was the man for the post; a man who maintained his relations with journalists on the principle of give and take, who did not put them off with nebulous speeches when they wanted definite news, and was so far from underestimating their intelligence that he gave them propaganda for the Government policy in the form of reliable information. His complete mastery of his task as well as his real knowledge of events permitted him to carry his communications very near the edge of indiscretion.

The influence that he acquired brought him inevitably into conflict with the influence exercised by Stresemann. The achievement at which both men aimed was, in fact, identical; it was over the means to secure it that their opinions differed. Spiecker held fast to the policy of the coalition, and preserved an

absolute loyalty to Social Democracy; while Stresemann felt in his finger-tips the coming swing to the Right. In his mind party politics ranked below foreign politics, and he was prepared to throw over his allies of yesterday to secure the support of the Right for his policy of the morrow.

Stresemann argued that the important thing was to convert or persuade the parties of the Right to a policy of conciliation, in which the Left would more or less co-operate; while Spiecker laboured at a structure of reliable republican elements, and looked dubiously at the Greek gifts of the Nationalists in the field of foreign politics.

In the weeks that followed the London Conference, the cleavage between Stresemann and Spiecker—outwardly, of course, between the Foreign Minister and the Chancellor—grew daily more pronounced. As always happens when there are differences of opinion between members of a Government, helpers were not wanting on both sides who intensified the friction, and set an edge on trivial irritations by trivial chatter. Marx enjoyed the full confidence of the Left which Spiecker had won for him, and in this conflict the Left stood firmly at his side. The rooted mistrust of Stresemann soon came to a head. His most faithful supporters on the Left, such as Georg Bernhard, who hailed him in August 1923 with a leading article entitled "Bravo, Chancellor," now attacked him with the sort of venom that comes only from disappointed love. Stresemann had dropped his mask, according to the Social Democrats—he was negotiating with the Nationalists, he did not deny his Nationalist past. "Stresemann must go!" was the cry of

the Left, and *Germania*, which was the inspired organ of the Head of the Press Department, wrote that it should not be assumed that a German Cabinet was impossible without Stresemann. For the loss of his support by the Left, Stresemann found no compensation on the Right, which was, indeed, as disillusioned as the Left; but the parties of the Right were anxious not to have swallowed the bitter Dawes pill for nothing, and for a while they ceased to attack Stresemann, whom they insisted should now fulfil the promises he made at the time of the negotiations over the Dawes laws.

In a bewildering confusion of new and old hostilities, new and old quarrels, of tension in foreign affairs and hatred in domestic politics, the Cabinet fell. The "inevitable Christmas Government Crisis" as Stresemann called it, made its punctual appearance.

IX

LOCARNO

"IF there is any prospect of a conference between the States who are interested in the Rhine with a view to a mutual guarantee that the present boundaries shall be maintained for a definite period, Germany would at any time be prepared to enter upon such a covenant, to avert the risk of further conflict, and especially of further exhaustion of the national strength." Such had been Stresemann's words upon the occasion of his great speech at Stuttgart while he was Chancellor.

This first *ballon d'essai* produced no result; the Chancellor's offer was completely ignored. And yet the unresolved question of security lay like a heavy cloud over Europe.

At an extremely critical moment in German domestic politics when a Government had fallen and prospects seemed hopeless, the question was taken up by the opposite side. A juncture at which Germany, distracted by troubles at home, counted for even less than usual as a factor in foreign politics, seemed to Sir Austen Chamberlain especially favourable for suggesting to Paris a pact of the Western Powers, a pact between England, France and Belgium, directed against Germany. When Chamberlain took over the Foreign Ministry, he found a most unpleasant legacy in the shape of the Geneva Protocol.[1] It was essential to get rid of this as soon as possible, and this could only be done by putting something in its place.

[1] Of 1924: relating to Arbitration, Security and Disarmament.

Chamberlain's deep feeling for France made such a Western Pact seem the only possible solution. He who had once expressed himself as loving France as a man loves his mistress, came forward like a knight of King Arthur's Round Table to offer this beloved land Great Britain's protection against the barbarians.

Rumours of the proposed pact had found their way to Berlin, the French newspapers were already preparing public opinion, and a new development in international politics seemed imminent. If this pact came into being, Germany, for years to come, would be excluded from her proper place in the community of Europe. The decisiveness of the moment was only realised by three people—the fallen Foreign Minister, the English Ambassador, and the new Secretary of State, von Schubert, who had succeeded Maltzan. Stresemann saw the door into Europe, which had been opened for him in London, shut once more. He had for a time breathed the European air, he had sat at the council table as an equal beside the English Labour leader, then Prime Minister of Great Britain, and the Mayor of Lyons, who represented the real conquerors—he had held out against the two of them and had felt himself their match. Now he was again to be made personally responsible for every refractory sergeant-major, every mutinous officer. The Inter-Allied Military Commission could not make up their minds to announce that Germany's disarmament was complete. He knew that final settlement could not be expected for a considerable time—in point of fact, the Inter-Allied Commission's Note was not communicated to the German Government until 4th June, and in the interval decisions might be taken in the west

that would wreck all his efforts. He did not want to let himself be thrust back into a humiliating interchange of cuit Notes, into the helpless attitude of an accused person who was called upon to answer for every error committed by every Department of State. He fought for his place in Europe—he must secure it, at any cost, for himself and for his country ; even at the cost of a responsibility that he alone had to assume and that none could share with him in the event of failure.

Such thoughts as these passed through his mind in those Christmas weeks. A few houses away, in the Strousberg mansion with the Greek pediment, sat the British Ambassador, and saw his work, too, imperilled. He was haunted by the spectre of a close alliance between Germany and Russia, in the event of the conclusion of such a compact by the Western Powers. He who had observed from very near at hand the onset of Bolshevism in Warsaw, saw in his imagination the Red flood sweeping over Germany, and he knew that if Bolshevism were organised with German thoroughness, the far-flung British Empire would shake on its foundations.

Carl von Schubert, in his slow reflective way, reached after the same conclusions as his Minister. What with Stresemann was the result of instinct, inspiration, the very shorthand of thought, Schubert could only attain by an exact knowledge of the circumstances, careful examination of his facts, and a laborious review of their implications. The conclusions to which he came were more deeply rooted, and he clung to them with a persistence that gave no room for compromise.

When he took over the position of his friend Ago

von Maltzan, he brought his own policy with him and substituted a western for an eastern orientation. For some considerable time proposals for a security pact, couched in varying terms, had been lying in the Chancery at the Foreign Office. All previous attempts had failed, partly, perhaps, on account of their unfortunate wording, but much more so owing to the unfavourable circumstances. After careful reflection, Schubert chose the draft that seemed to him most suitable. With a view of averting the unhappy fate of the Cuno proposal, it was decided to proceed indirectly, and first to make unofficial inquiries in England as to the form in which such an offer could be most acceptably put forward. He had chosen this method as a result of consultation with the English Ambassador. Lord d'Abernon, who was disquieted by Chamberlain's activities in Paris, saw an opportunity of carrying through a policy that seemed to him the only right one. Perhaps, too, better acquainted as he was with the atmosphere of English public opinion than Chamberlain, he realised even then that a bilateral security treaty would be much better received than a one-sided pact of the Western Powers. He declared himself as very ready to address a confidential enquiry to his Government. Shortly after the Christmas festivities the first tentative attempt was made.

History can hardly produce a precedent for the initiation of so significant a move by a really non-existent Government. The hour and the form in which the subsequent Locarno plan saw the light of day bear no impress whatever of an historical event. In the room of the Secretary of State, on a grey winter morning, sat two men facing each other; the small

chairs and insignificant writing-table seemed overwhelmed by the weight of those two mighty forms. Two heads emerged from the darkness of the room, the heavy tanned face of the Secretary of State with its prominent nose and heavy-lidded goggling eyes, in strong contrast with the other's narrow brow and silver hair. One by one the sentences fell from the German's lips, and as he was accustomed to think visually, he wrote them down on a large sheet of paper in front of him, because he found expressions come more easily if he wrote them down. Lord d'Abernon nodded to himself from time to time, then he pulled a stump of pencil from his pocket, which was quite lost in the grasp of his enormous hand, pushed back his loose black sleeves, and wrote on the shining starched white surface of his cuffs. The words that he wrote down in this way—one that was very usual with him—were the first intimation to the world of the first great treaty of peace between the Western Powers.

The security proposal which, veiled in the deepest secrecy, now set forth on its appointed way, did not exhaust the activity of the fallen Foreign Minister. He at the same time addressed a Note to the ten Powers represented on the Council of the League of Nations, in which he again put forward an earlier request for the admission of Germany to the League. But this was merely moving in a circle, since so long as the disarmament of Germany was not announced as complete, she could not be admitted to the League. Thus began Stresemann's struggle against Europe.

In the meantime he had, in the eyes of Europe, assumed a very disagreeable burden. After infinite vacillation—a Marx Cabinet with the Nationalists,

with and without Marx, with and without Stresemann, appeared like soap-bubbles and burst—the Moderates combined and formed a Cabinet under Luther, which very reluctantly and only thanks to Luther's adroitness, came to an understanding with Stresemann and adopted his policy. This decision caused all the more bitterness, as on 5th January a collective Note was presented on behalf of the Allied Governments in which it was stated Germany had not fulfilled the provisions of Article 429 of the Treaty of Versailles and was therefore not entitled to ask for a partial evacuation before the date laid down. A number of instances were given in proof that the disarmament clauses had not been carried out, but a subsequent Note from the Inter-Allied Military Commission was promised in which a full statement of Germany's delinquencies should be set forth.

This Allied Note, which d'Abernon himself presented with a heavy heart, because he had always taken the view that the important matter at the moment was not the destruction of a few guns and rifles and that the question of future security was of far greater urgency, raised a storm of indignation in Germany which in the first instance was directed against England.

England's attitude was to make her even more unpopular. The unofficial inquiries in London ended at first in complete failure. Chamberlain, who was heavily engaged with the negotiations over the Pact, and shortly before at the last meeting of the Council of the League of Nations in Rome had announced the speedy demise of the Protocol, regarded such an attempt to intrude upon his exertions as a piece of impertinence. He was even more irritated by the

suggestion that he should involve himself in secret conversations. He looked on the whole manœuvre as a perfidious attempt on Germany's part to disturb the good understanding between England and France. On these grounds he preserved a dead silence about the incident and thought by this means to have disposed of it once and for all. But while Chamberlain said nothing, his Ambassador became unusually conversational. He appeared more and more often in the Wilhelmstrasse, talked to Stresemann and Schubert in the most paternal manner, and went perhaps so far as to conceal his chief's ill-humour. On d'Abernon's advice, it was decided, in spite of the absence of a reply from England, and with the purpose, too, of anticipating a direct refusal, to approach officially both France and England. A trifling but opportune incident seemed also to suggest that further concealment of the manœuvre from France would be unwise. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, one of those who could not get over his mistrust of Stresemann, wrote that Stresemann's advances to the Nationalists had made it impossible for him to treat with the English Government regarding the evacuation of the Cologne zone.

Among the Left, where the flames of indignation against the renegade burned most fiercely, this news was greeted with much joy. Dr. Breitscheid decided to question Stresemann in the Reichstag. The Foreign Minister found himself confronted by an awkward dilemma. Either he must admit that he had really dropped the negotiations with England over the evacuation and face the consequences of a vote of want of confidence—or he must disclose his

hitherto abortive manœuvre and so abandon the last prospect of success. There was, however, one journalist, the only individual, besides those concerned, who was acquainted with the facts, who, without giving the facts away, removed the misunderstanding.

But in the meantime the risk had become obvious, and it was decided that an official communication to France could no longer be postponed. The Note, which was despatched to Paris on 9th February, was indeed accompanied by a request for strict secrecy. In this case, too, it seemed as though the move would be a fruitless one. Herriot locked the Note up in his private drawer, discussed it a few days later confidentially with his more intimate colleagues, but refrained from considering the offer at an open meeting of the Cabinet, and declined to be hurried into a hasty answer. Chamberlain was less reserved than his French colleague. The German communication was, he said, "unwise and premature," and he intimated that his reply should be conveyed to Stresemann. When the Foreign Minister read this observation he was seized by one of his sudden though evanescent attacks of rage. He snatched at the telephone receiver and asked the English Ambassador to come and see him. With a disarming smile d'Abernon entered the room. "He comes in bright and beaming, and behaves as if nothing had happened," said Stresemann later to his colleagues. What most annoyed him was the schoolmasterly tone of the reply. He saw before him Sir Austen Chamberlain's upraised forefinger, and he decided to drop the whole affair without more ado. "I fight my colleagues in the Cabinet and positively

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extort agreement from them, and then I'm treated like this," he almost shouted at d'Abernon. But his anger could not withstand the Englishman's smiling composure. D'Abernon began by trying to attach a rather different intention to the offending words, just as on a later occasion well-meaning people tried to explain away by comparative philology Snowden's word "ridiculous" at The Hague. And above all he counselled Stresemann to persevere in the course he had now taken. He left the Foreign Minister soothed and half-convinced, went on to see Schubert, and to him used the same diplomatically veiled but not less significant language. The weeks that immediately followed were to prove him right.

In the meantime Germany was again torn by political struggles. On 25th February, Friedrich Ebert, first President of the German Republic, died suddenly. For Stresemann it was a heavy personal loss. In the difficult year 1923 there had grown up between the two men a silent and friendly understanding. It may be that their community of purpose counted for more than any emotional sympathy—however it was, in spite of passing misapprehensions and occasional friction, Stresemann found the President ever ready with help and support—even against his own Party, as in the case of the invasion of Saxony by the Reichswehr.

The question of a successor was to be a problem that distracted all minds for months ahead. Stresemann himself was offered the candidature. But he refused it with a laugh: "I am still too young and active to be a figure-head," he said. Weeks went past and produced nothing but a succession of political

combinations and a network of political intrigues; the Government parties could not at first agree upon a common candidate.

At one time it seemed as though Gessler had the chance of uniting the votes of the Moderate parties. His candidature was discussed at a special meeting of the People's Party. Stresemann stood out sharply and decisively against Gessler. He pointed out that the choice of the Reichswehr Minister, whose character was so much canvassed abroad, would make a very bad impression, and would, at this time of dissension over disarmament, be taken as a provocation. So long as he was speaking, he carried his audience with him. Delighted with his success, he went home to lunch, and when he had finished he lay down as his habit was, with his large check rug over his feet and his little black bulldog in his arms.

His afternoon doze was suddenly interrupted. Notwithstanding the energetic protests of the servant, who had orders on no account to allow his master's sleep to be disturbed, a Deputy belonging to the People's Party rushed into the room. There had been an afternoon meeting, and when the impression left by Stresemann's speech had faded, the members were disposed to agree on a resolution giving the support of the party to Gessler's candidature. Once again Stresemann returned to the attack, and brought his refractory party round. This time he remained the victor, but he returned with the bitter conviction of the transience of his own influence. The party had agreed on Jarres; the first canvass had produced a hopeless division of votes.

In the meantime the significant change of feeling,

that Lord d'Abernon had foreseen, was taking place in England. Public opinion was now a factor that would be in favour of the German offer. On 6th March Chamberlain had left England to take part in a meeting of the Council of the League of Nations. On 7th March a conversation took place between him and Herriot that was to be of very great influence on coming developments. Herriot expressed himself as very well disposed to the German offer. He even went so far as to tell the astounded Chamberlain that he had informed the German Ambassador in Paris that the German proposal seemed to him a promising basis for discussion.

Nothing was left for Chamberlain to do but to bury the Protocol in an interminable speech at the meeting of the League Council on 12th March. The length of the speech seemed almost intended to compensate for its essential want of purpose. His hands moved awkwardly through the air as if in vague definition of the words that were to follow—and indeed, to a spectator, those clumsy schoolboy hands seemed to have no connection with the rigid monocled face above them.

The speech, which appeared to represent a complete withdrawal on the part of Great Britain from any co-operation in European reconstruction, aroused such disappointment in League circles that Chamberlain had to deliver himself of an explanation on the following day, in which he emphasised the British Government's attachment to the principles of arbitration and disarmament, and its keen anxiety to contribute to the peace and security of the world.

These handsome words called for deeds to support

them; the public opinion of the world as well as the general feeling in England demanded a substitute for the Protocol. At a memorable Cabinet meeting on 18th March Chamberlain submitted to his colleagues the draft of his proposed pact between the Western Powers. He met with an opposition that quite astonished him; and his proposal was rejected by a majority. Sir Austen found himself in a highly unpleasant position. A debate in Parliament was fixed for 24th March, which would involve a vigorous attack by Lloyd George and a bitter Opposition speech from Macdonald, who was very indignant at the silent demise of the Protocol. However, as fate would have it, this debate, which should have brought about the fall of the English Foreign Minister, provided him with an opportunity for a triumph. It had been assumed that he would face the resentful assemblage with empty hands; but, like a dexterous conjuror, he produced the German proposal from his pocket. He could not entirely conceal his irritation at the secret manœuvres of the Germans, and there was a clearly recognisable ring of disapproval in his tone as he observed: "The German proposals were, very properly, put in a somewhat liquid shape. They have not been the subject of any precise or rigid definition. They are put forward as a possible basis for discussion, not as a thing to be taken or left, or an agreement already put into a form in which it might be signed. They did not come to me fully in the first instance. They came to me in circumstances of attempted secrecy which, as I have already admitted, caused me to feel some suspicion about them." After this reprimand he proceeded: "But I am convinced—

and I say so from my place here—from what has passed since, that the German Government are making a sincere and honest attempt to lead to a better state of things, and it is in the hope that we may assist to carry that effort to a fruitful conclusion that we have engaged in our serious discussion of their proposals. . . . I think the House will agree with His Majesty's Government that it is a signal advance that such proposals should have reached us, even in a vague form and on her own motion, from Germany."

Lloyd George listened to all this with breathless amazement, and hardly had the speaker finished than he said emphatically: "This is most important. It is the first time that we have had any account of this significant offer. Am I to understand that Germany is prepared to recognise the frontiers in the West, and will not ask for any reconsideration or revision of these frontiers?"

Nothing was left for Macdonald but to allow his great fighting speech to dwindle into a mere question about Germany's admission to the League of Nations.

In the meantime Fleuriau, the French Ambassador in London, who on the very day of that memorable meeting of the English Cabinet had had a long interview with Chamberlain, hurried to Paris to see whether it was possible still to save the Western Pact. He knew that the main opposition had emanated from Churchill, who was vainly awaiting a reply to his memorandum on the French debt, and was now, shortly before the closure of his budget, in a painful position. He tried to induce Clémentel to send a favourable answer, but had as little luck with him as

with Herriot. In any case, the Parliamentary debate of 24th March was decisive. There was now only one alternative—the bilateral Security Pact; and it must be turned to the best advantage. Chamberlain had entered upon the new policy with all the enthusiasm of the novice. Once the enemy of the Security Pact, he had now become its advocate; he had changed from the magisterial critic of the German Plan into a likely candidate for the Nobel prize.

Chamberlain's conversion was, however, only the first step to success. The scaffolded idea must now be clothed in the solid structure of definition, antagonisms must be reconciled, and justice done to apparently irreconcilable demands.

In those days, when the Locarno Pact was assuming its final shape, chance provided for a more frequent intercourse between Stresemann and Lord d'Abernon. The English painter Augustus John came to Germany to paint Stresemann's portrait. The Ambassador induced the busy Minister to promise a few sittings in the middle of the day. Stresemann used to sit in an armchair, rather tired, having missed his accustomed sleep after luncheon. Augustus John struggled with the canvas in his efforts to conjure up the essential Stresemann, while d'Abernon spoke long and earnestly to the German Foreign Minister. The painter did not understand a single word of the conversation, which was in German, and, moreover he was much too busy trying to penetrate the outward appearance of his subject and get at the kernel of the man. He felt the energy, the hard tense will that went forth from Stresemann, and leapt upon the observer like a mail-clad fist; he felt the alert intelligence that was eloquent

in Stresemann's every word and every gesture; but all he saw before him was the man's reddish skin, watery blue eyes, loose lips, thick neck, and an expression that suggested cunning. There sat the two of them, so fundamentally different—the sturdy thick-set German, and the gigantic Englishman with his dark glowing eyes and his impenetrable smile, busily writing notes on his gleaming shirt-cuffs, while they spoke of strange things in a strange tongue. And from time to time a transfiguring light would flash across the German's face, or a look come into his eyes that seemed to range beyond the room and the men within it, into a far-distant future.

The realisation of his hopes, to which, in his optimism, Stresemann even then looked forward, was to be stayed and retarded by unexpected political developments. The progress of the German security offer until the goal was reached at Locarno was a single large zigzag line, which often looked as though it would never get anywhere.

On 10th April Herriot was overthrown. He was just about to send an official reply to the German offer, and Briand came upon his predesessor's half-finished draft.

The events in Germany that followed immediately upon the Cabinet's assumption of office had at first a paralysing effect on the goodwill of the new French Government.

At the second Presidential election two candidates—and two worlds—stood in opposition. The battle between Yesterday and To-day, that was fought out in this election, was somewhat unfairly balanced against To-day, in so far as the romantically appealing

figure of Hindenburg could only be confronted by the nebulous good-natured silhouette of the Centre-Party Chancellor. Spiecker, who conducted the propaganda for the united Popular Parties, did his best to discover some attractive features in Marx's pallid countenance, but the task was beyond even his energy and ingenuity.

Hindenburg was elected by various elements: by disappointed, discontented people; by those who were rooted in the past; by many, too, who were indifferent, by old people, and by those who were in love with recollection. The impression made by his election was devastating, as much in German democratic circles as abroad. But those who refused to believe in the possibility of Hindenburg's election proved just as mistaken as those who expected a reincarnation of Yesterday. The power of fact was stronger than the weight of recollection. The very circumstance that the great Field-Marshal so completely represented the old order prevented him, for that reason, from carrying with him into the disrupted present anything but his vast latent force, his simplicity and steadiness of outlook, that was to stand as an abiding rock in the swirl of hurrying events.

Hindenburg's election, which began as a defeat of democracy, proved, in effect, a defeat for monarchical intrigue and all the extremist agitation of the Right. His mere presence induced the circles of the Right to regard the despised Jew-Republic with a new respect. In the difficult months that lay ahead, his prestige protected the Government from the most savage attacks. Much later, in the same measure as the regard for his steadfast uprightness increased among the ranks of the

Left, his prestige, his heroic glory, began to wane among the adherents of the Right, who gradually realised that they had helped to elevate an illusion of their own hopes.

When Hindenburg took the oath to the Constitution in the Reichstag, which had been solemnly decorated for the occasion, when he loomed up beside the diminutive President, his gigantic form tightly buttoned into a long black frock-coat; when he turned his lined and riven face towards the House and opened his expressionless eyes—like a tower of tribulation in that breathless listening hall—when his great deep voice with its subterranean reverberations burst upon the stillness, everyone was aware that this man could not commit a perjury: an oath was for him an oath, whether it was given to the old order or the new, and the German Republic would suffer no harm at the hands of the loyal servant of the Emperor.

In very truth, this election, at first so destructive of all hopes, was one of the means used by Providence to bring about the birth of an idea.

The victor of Tannenberg was destined, when the war was lost, to win one of the greatest victories of the peace, and to impress the great sign-manual of the past on the politics of a new age.

The fact that the surge of excitement abroad over Hindenburg's election was so quickly calmed, and the sudden uprush of mistrust so soon died down, goes to show that the power of reason in Europe had greatly advanced. In the drama that was later to be called Locarno, the first act had begun; all that had happened hitherto had been no more than the prelude.

On 12th May Briand sent to London the draft of a

reply to the German Note. This document was to be a turning-point in Anglo-French relations. The exchange of Notes with Curzon, which aroused such fury in France, was a mere preliminary skirmish compared with the battle that now broke out between the two Foreign Offices. Chamberlain, who had no room in his head for more than one set of ideas and sensations, had so completely adapted himself to the now obvious purpose of English public opinion and of his colleagues in the Government, that he did not in any way attempt to withstand the general trend of feeling. This was—No commitments in the East; and Chamberlain made this known in Paris in more than his accustomed bald and uncompromising manner. He began by protesting that Briand's draft must not be sent as a combined reply from all the Allied Governments; whereupon Briand replied with some irritation that the document had been conceived as drafted in the name of France, though in agreement with her Allies. The harsh schoolmasterly tone, which Chamberlain had hitherto reserved for Germany, was now observable in all the Notes he sent to Paris. It was not compatible with England's principles, with her world-wide responsibility, for her to undertake other duties than those contained in the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League of Nations, and he offered France the alternative of sending her reply on her own behalf and responsibility, or altering the passages to which the British Government objected.

The French draft was now corrected like a school exercise, with the desired alterations entered neatly against every succeeding clause. A request for explanations was what the British Government called the

exchange of Notes that began on 28th May: it was, in fact, nothing less than a conflict between two political orientations, or, more exactly, the replacement of one policy by one radically different. If a less able diplomat and a less courageous politician had been in power in Paris at that moment, Anglo-French friendship would have been destroyed. Milder Notes than Chamberlain's had served to awaken a storm of indignation in Paris and mobilised all the slumbering resentment against England. But a man was in control who could, when he liked, play upon the instrument of public opinion like an artist, and on this occasion Briand did not fail to exert all his talents.

He summoned the representatives of the French Press, explained the position and spoke so impressively that the next morning Chamberlain could scarcely trust his eyes when he saw in the columns of the French Press, instead of the expected chorus of indignation, expressions of the most cordial agreement. The French Note was then amended in the English sense, but before it reached the hands of the German Government, as a prelude to the flutes of peace came the last trumpet fanfare of the war; the Note of the Inter-allied Military Commission which was delivered at Berlin on 4th June.

Four months had elapsed since the German proposals for security, and the German Government was still awaiting a reply. Instead of this they were confronted with a long list of German delinquencies, and if Stresemann had not been kept very well informed of the Anglo-French discussions, and had not been aware of the imminent despatch of the French Note, he would have regarded the report of the Military

Commission, appearing as it did after months of silence, as something like a blow in the face.

As it was, he was merely consumed by a feeling of impatience to raise the whole question of Franco-German relations on to another and a higher level, to drag it from the darkness of post-war feuds into the light of European reconciliation.

He called the representatives of the foreign Press together in the green pillared hall of the Chancellor's palace, the only platform from which he could address the world at large. He made an able defence against the individual accusations contained in the Note, parried the questions addressed to him, and argued with figures supplied to him by his Department—but suddenly the man, in whom burned the fever of impatience, the ardour for achievement, got the upper hand over the able advocate with his armoury of documents and calculations. The great resonant voice pealed out across the green table, so that the rows of heads over their papers jerked up in amazement. "But this is all work for petty officials!" he cried; "I had expected a more generous answer to my offer of guarantees. These are misunderstandings that can be settled by Heads of Departments. I am concerned with great political questions. Germany offered to guarantee the western frontier, and she is answered in the spirit of chicane." Then followed his first appeal, made thus indirectly through the world Press, to the leading statesmen to gather round the green table and discuss these great questions as man to man. The resounding voice suddenly lost its metallic quality, and became strangely earnest and insistent; there was a hint of something like anxiety in his blue eyes as they ranged

over the uplifted faces before him. Had they rightly understood his appeal? But all he heard was a rustle of hurriedly folded papers, as the foreign journalists dashed away to telegraph the Foreign Minister's speech out into the world. They exchanged a few brief words as they went—"A sly bird" said an American with a meaning laugh, and rushed out of the green hall that had been a witness of so many historic meetings, and now, unsuspected and indeed scarcely noticed by that company, was experiencing its greatest hour—the turning-point of European policy, the birth of a diplomacy. Locarno, Thoiry, the Hague—landmarks of European development, discussions between responsible statesmen instead of wearisome exchanges of Notes—all originate in that moment of cleavage with the past.

It seemed at first as though the German Foreign Minister's hint which he caused to be repeated through his ambassadors and all available intermediaries between himself and the Allied Powers, would meet with no response. Notes were followed by answering Notes, the German Memorandum of 20th July, a document intended rather for domestic than foreign consumption, was badly received in both France and England, outbursts in the German Press were followed by outbursts in the French Press, but the idea of peace was on the march, and neither Notes nor speeches nor newspaper articles could stay its progress. Countless problems were raised and flung into the turmoil of discussion, but the main lines of development remained undisturbed.

Events, which had seemed hitherto to have proceeded in slow motion, now began to quicken speed.

In August, first Caillaux and then Briand went to London, and the outcome of the impressions that they gathered was the memorandum of the French Government that led immediately to the Conference of Locarno. The French Government's Note of 24th August bore for the first time the stamp of Briand's future policy. Here, for the first time, was not a conqueror speaking to the conquered, but one Power addressing another—for the first time, a tone was used that made it possible to forget the hostile relations between the two countries. More important still than this symptomatic change of tenor, was the fact that the routine of memoranda was abandoned for a new world of personal discussion. To begin with, the jurists arranged a conference in London with the German delegate Gauss, the able, far-sighted and learned legal advisor to the Foreign Office, the very embodiment of the idea of justice. Hours of practical negotiation sufficed for the work of months. The nature of a conference—the common search for formulas of compromise—was understood by all who were present. Jurist spoke to jurist, national susceptibilities were reduced to paragraphs, fear, mistrust, and suspicion of underhand designs, vanished in the cool air of interchanged legalities. But after the meeting of the jurists was to come the great assemblage of statesmen, the hour of encounter from which the new Europe was to arise.

When Stresemann went to Locarno, he was full of curiosity and excitement at the prospect of his first meeting with Briand. He had for a long time felt that here was a man not moulded to the measure of the old diplomacy, one who seemed to have burst through the

age-long democratic framework of his country ; a man who had risen to power from the humblest beginnings, who had known how to change his mind and turn his back on yesterday—a man with his own ideas, and above the pedantic traffic of officialdom. He was so inquisitive over his opponent that he was constantly asking questions about him, and listened eagerly to all the anecdotes that had gathered more thickly round Briand than any other European statesman. The first meeting with Briand had, to Stresemann's great disappointment, to be postponed. When the latter arrived in Locarno he had a high temperature and one of those constant inflammations of the throat that undermined his health more than he himself suspected. Luther had to represent him, and it was not until a few days later, when the fever had left him, that the great encounter took place in the presence of Chamberlain and Luther.

Two typical embodiments of two races, two representatives of different worlds were there confronted. The German, with his round dome-like, bald and shining cranium, very correct and painfully neat in his dark suit and white starched collar, rigidly erect, with a certain stiff constraint in his movements, clenched hands, and that metallic voice of his that carried his rolling sentences like a broad incessant stream. Opposite him, the Frenchman, with his slightly rounded back and disordered hair, his sensitive mouth half-covered by a straggling moustache, drooping eyelids and a knowing mocking look in the corners of his eyes, a look of amusement and disillusion that sought to strip men and things of their disguises ; with the half-smile that lurked in the down-drawn corners of

his mouth, the slender vivacious hands and tapering fingers, the deep rich warm voice that concealed a whole orchestra of tones and undertones.

Through clouds of cigar-smoke Stresemann's eyes were fixed on the infinitely mobile face of the virtuoso of French politics. So this was the first statesman of all-powerful France? he looked much more like one of those artists who sit until the small hours at a round table in their favourite Café and challenge the order of the universe. A man unballasted by class prejudice, tradition, or inveterate principles, a man who could divest himself of all the attributes of power, of all the adventitious dignity of his position, a man whose every gesture, every word, and every look made all the old pomps and ceremonies appear cheap and ridiculous. Here was someone who had so much natural force that he could afford to be no more and no less than a man—a man of to-day, lifted far above the murk of rank and power, and withal so sure of himself that his mere humanity could prevail over power and rank. This was what most impressed itself on Stresemann's mind as a result of his first meeting with Briand. He had been brought up in a world where everyone had to contend against a tradition of behaviour both personal and professional, and of propriety in social life. In the world from which he came every class had its gestures, its prescribed social ritual. In Germany of William II this framework for those aspiring to any sort of professional career was more compelling than at any other age. Officer or official, student or statesman, were guided by an indispensable pattern of decorum. But not merely did Bismarck's statuesque attitude seem inevitably involved in the duties of the position; he

was well aware that even Napoleon had consulted Talma as to a demeanour that might impress the imagination of the masses. Here, however, was a man who had no need to entrench himself behind even a minimum of pose, a man who waved aside all formalities of intercourse, who said "I," while Chamberlain talked about "His Majesty's Government"; a man who emphasised his own personality most strongly when others would have tried to divest themselves of theirs, who identified himself with his country, so that his careless freedom, his Bohemian unconcern was a much truer embodiment of the phrase "L'état c'est moi," than all the portentous poses of the Roi Soleil.

Courage and faith in himself—this was what Stresemann found in Briand in their first and in their later meetings. His warm and large humanity, so ill at ease in any sort of pose, prevailed over the last remains of convention, constraint, and tradition. The type of the statesman of the new age which he met with for the first time in Briand, served as a visible expression of his break with the past, and convinced him that he too was no diplomatist of an age long since passed away, but one who was called upon to create a new age, with new methods, new demands, and new values.

And Briand? What sort of view did he take of the intensely personal relation between the two men? He recorded it in his own words later on. "When I sat opposite Herr Stresemann for the first time at Locarno we discussed the phraseology of the treaty, and the last points that needed clearing up. Our talk was practical and impersonal, our negotiations proceeded smoothly and without friction, and seemed

likely to be very soon over. Suddenly Stresemann's companion felt it his duty to bring in the note of emotion which we had so carefully avoided. In his excellent French, he began to describe the situation in Germany; he spoke in impressive language that he had prepared beforehand of the injustice done to his country and the terrible sufferings of the people. I felt that there was risk that the conversation would be diverted from the sphere of practicalities and dissipate itself in the old dangerous lamentations; I saw the cloud of ill-humour settle on Chamberlain's brow and I watched him pull a longer face than usual; and I felt that I should have to say something about my own people if the other persisted in his tale of woe. So I laid my hand on his shoulder and said: 'Don't go on, you will make us all burst into tears.' He stopped abruptly, flushed with anger, and glared at me savagely. I looked across at Stresemann to see if he had rightly understood my intervention; and I saw blue eyes glinting with a smile. The humour of the situation had not escaped him, and when he caught my deprecating look, he could not contain himself and burst into a loud disarming laugh. *Alors j'ai compris que c'était un homme.*"

"A new epoch must begin with Locarno, or else it will have been merely an empty gesture," said Briand on the day when the treaty was provisionally signed. With Locarno a new age began for Germany, for Europe, and for the world. On the day of Locarno the war constellation was dissolved, and Germany was admitted into the concert of the Powers. The circle in which the defeated nation had been penned was broken. Germany was no longer an object of policy,

she had recovered her subjective existence. Between the abandonment of passive resistance and the mutual co-operation at Locarno barely two years had elapsed. One man and one only had trod that path; one man and one only had brought himself and his people out of the deepest valley of defeat on to the world plain of national self-respect.

But the man who grasped the spokes of history's wheel had to face the most violent storm of his stormy experience when he returned to his own country. The Treaty of Locarno was high treason—loud were the shouts for his impeachment that went up from the Press of the Right. The signatories of the Versailles Treaty had at least the excuse that they acted under durance; but Gustav Stresemann, the traitor, had of his own free will surrendered Alsace-Lorraine to France. He was paid by the French—Frau Stresemann was the sister of Madame Poincaré—just as it was once reported that Rathenau's sister had married Radek. Moreover, Stresemann had been bought by the Jews, bribed by the wise men of Zion. This was not merely said, but also believed, and that not only in Pomerania and the *Miesbacher Anzeiger*, not only in remote country villages and Old Comrades' Associations, but in Berlin and Dresden; not only by the diehards of the old regime, but even by the length and breadth of the German middle class. A flood of filth and slander burst over the head of the returning Minister. He read the first press comments in the train to Berlin, and a flame of anger flashed into his face. He was still so sensitive against criticism that every attack, every vile malignant word, struck him like the lash of a whip. This was far indeed from the atmosphere of his joyous

voyage on board "The Orange Blossom."[1] The first intimation of the cleavage between his estimation by European standards, and his assessment by his fellow-countrymen, began to glimmer in his mind.

The railway station in Berlin was surrounded by police. The hour of his arrival was kept strictly secret; only the heads of foreign missions, who had been confidentially informed of it, were there to meet him. Foreign diplomatists congratulated Stresemann on his great work. His greeting in Germany was indignation and abuse. Lord d'Abernon, a towering figure in his huge cloak, shook his hand with singular emotion, and the smile that seemed almost engraved upon his face was for once absent. This quite unemotional personage knew that the weary and unnerved man who got out of the train had made history. Meanwhile, however, Gustav Stresemann had to enter his native city by devious ways and under police protection.

[1] The launch, 'Fiori d'Arancis,' used by the Allied statesmen at Locarno.

X

POLITICAL CROSS-CURRENTS

"If the Imperial Cabinet has agreed that Stresemann shall state his views of Locarno before the Committee for Foreign Affairs, it is merely allowing him the right of defence that is conceded to any murderer or similarly unprofitable member of the community. Though it is possible that there are many members of our party who regard Stresemann as something worse than a murderer, we consider none the less that the Cabinet were right in their decision to permit Stresemann to defend himself."

Thus wrote Colonel von Rodenberg in the *Preussische Landeszeitung*. The Cabinet itself was torn by the bitterest conflicts. Under pressure of the fury that swept through the ranks of the Right, the Nationalist Ministers thrust all the burden of responsibility for the "shameful treaty" on to Stresemann. It suddenly appeared that they had known nothing about any suggestion of negotiations. They referred to a protest which they alleged they had raised, but of which public opinion had heard nothing for several months. All that they could deny, they denied. It sounded, in fact, as though they had never belonged to the Government.

The allies that Stresemann had secured at the cost of so many sacrifices, failed him in the hour of need. But not merely the Nationalist members of the Cabinet turned against the treaty. A most respected Minister

cried that he had begotten so many children in the shadow of Cologne Cathedral that he could not subscribe to the renunciation of German land. In these stormy disputes in the Cabinet Stresemann found support from one source whence he would have least expected it. His old enemy Gessler got up and flung the voice of wholesome common-sense into the debate. "Renunciation?" he said in his Bavarian drawl; "you can't call it renunciation when a one-legged man is asked to promise that he won't take part in any more dancing competitions."

In addition to the conflicts in the Cabinet, Stresemann had to exert all his strength to hold his own against the exasperation of public opinion. The poisonous political atmosphere of the time had not merely infected the Right, but also the great mass of the moderate and indifferent middle classes.

Perhaps—and German public opinion is used to these explosions—no German statesman had ever been the subject of such damning judgments, such crass abuse, such outbursts of hatred. Strangely enough, however, the storm of indignation was of short duration, the breath was soon out of that vociferous protest. Perhaps the thought of European co-operation, that first found expression at Locarno, had such a powerful appeal that it worked more strongly upon the imagination of the masses than all other attempts at a policy of understanding which had hitherto been confined to the rather rarefied atmosphere of abstract reason. Perhaps, too, the singularly speedy extinction of such a vigorous conflagration may be ascribed to the odd sensitiveness of the German public to foreign opinion, so that the very sections of society who are so ready to accuse a

statesman of having sold his independence, are extremely easily impressed by any successes he may achieve upon the foreign stage. Just as Wirth's policy of acquiescence owed its defeat much more to his summary treatment by the Allies than to any immediate political obstacles at home, Stresemann's high reputation abroad helped him to prevail over domestic opposition. Foreign credit again proved to possess purchasing power in Germany. And Stresemann brought back much credit from Locarno and from his triumphant appearance in London. The weeks between London and Locarno, weeks of conflict and arduous missionary labours, served to reveal a clear revulsion of opinion.

Under cover of night and fog, in fear of an attempt against their lives, Stresemann and Luther departed for Locarno, and even in their dreams they were haunted by visions of torn-up rails, wrecked coaches, and exploding bombs. Amid the applause of a huge crowd the Foreign Minister and the Imperial Chancellor got into the saloon carriage that was to carry them to London. The railway station was thronged with Ambassadors, Ministers, Members of Parliament, and journalists of all countries; the rattle of the film apparatus drowned the hum of voices, the click of the cameras was like the crack of shots, the flashlight tore dazzling rents in the blackness of the December night and picked out Luther's round and solemn cranium, and Stresemann's large smile, from the seething crowd. Waving handkerchiefs and shouts of farewell followed the departing train that bore the German delegation away to take part in the great event. London had prepared for them the reception that Berlin expected.

The shadows of mourning for the Queen-Mother deprived the solemn act of signature of some of its proposed magnificence, but even without the reception at Buckingham Palace the first of December took its place as a great hour in the history of Europe.

Involuntarily Stresemann's thoughts sped back to the time, now more than a year ago, which he now realised was the first stage on this journey. Only a year ago, and the world looked at him with an altered face. Only a year ago and the German delegation were asking themselves whether they would receive the same treatment as the other members of the Conference and recognising, in the event, that the generously accorded acknowledgement of equality was a great step in advance. It was only a year since the participants had faced each other as two divided camps of victorious creditors and defeated debtors.

Now, only equal representatives of European States sat round the conference table. From the purely external point of view, much in the picture had changed. Many of those then present had been swept away by a new wave of public opinion. Instead of Macdonald's weary intellectual features he saw before him Chamberlain's rigid monocled countenance; Herriot's square peasant's skull had been replaced by Briand's worn, seamed face; even at his own side Luther's tense and solemn seriousness had succeeded Marx's eager geniality. He alone represented the German Empire as he had represented it then. But no longer as a suppliant, as one who came to ask, but as one who has something to bestow, he sat among the great Powers and knew that this solemn hour would never have come to fruition had he not laboured for it with his

whole strength, with all his gifts of mind and skill and patience.

For him too the great hour had struck. Now he was to address the forum of the world. This feeling went through his limbs like a shock as he slowly rose and surveyed the room once more. His gaze rested upon one face, a face in the background—a radiant smile and silver hair. There stood one who deserved more credit for this hour than many a man who was sitting at the front row at the table with the eyes of the world upon him. Stresemann nodded faintly to Lord d'Abernon,—in secret and gratified consciousness of their concealed connection a smile stole over his lips and vanished; then a torrent of strange speech, an unaccustomed voice, an odd accentuation burst upon the assemblage. But the German, Gustav Stresemann, whom many only half understood and many did not understand at all, spoke the language of Europe in the idiom of his own people. He spoke it better than those, and they were many, to whom the idea of Europe was still a strange word in use at international conferences, for he felt the realities behind the idea, and saw it vitalised by the life of nations. He flung himself with all the weight of his conviction upon the soulless phrases in which the word Europe is so abused; a light came into his eyes as he gazed at the visions evoked by his own eloquence, saw endless possibilities open out before him, and saw, too, the way in which they could be achieved.

"I see in Locarno, not a juridical structure of political conceptions, but a basis for a great development of the future. The statesmen and the nations therein recognise their purpose to prepare the way for

humanity's passionate desire for peace and understanding. If the pact were no more than a collection of clauses, then it would not endure. The forms that it seeks to find for the common life of our nations can only be realised if behind them stands the will to create new conditions in Europe. . . . We have a right to speak of a European idea,"—his voice grew more resonant and impressive as he proceeded; "This Europe of ours has made such vast sacrifices in the world war, and is now confronted by the danger that the after-effects of the war may deprive her of the position which her tradition and history enables her to claim. The losses suffered by this section of the globe in the great war are constantly measured by the material damage it involved and the ruin that succeeded it. But our greatest loss lies in the fact that a generation has perished, of which we cannot tell what undeveloped forces and possibilities, what powers of intellect and genius, of will and of achievement, might not have come to fruition if it had been given to those men to live out their lives. Together with the devastations of the world war, one fact emerges—that we are linked to one another by a common fate. If we go down, we go down together; if we wish to scale the heights, we cannot do so in conflict with each other, but only by a community of effort. In this common effort must be sought the foundation of the future."

The game of party-political tactics, which in Germany is subject to laws that almost always work in an inverse sense to the simultaneously valid laws of international politics, decreed that Stresemann on his return from London should have to cope with a prolonged Government crisis that started about

Christmas and involved a good deal of tiresome haggling to retain a majority in the Reichstag. The Nationalists withdrew their Ministers, and the reconstruction of the Cabinet proceeded in an atmosphere in which fear of responsibility contended with fear of exclusion; the discomfort of the whole situation being intensified by the Nationalists' hatred of Stresemann. This hatred found its high priest in Hugenberg, and received its bitterest expression in an article in the *Lokalanzeiger* under the heading: "Stresemann—Germany's Evil Genius." The enmity with which Hugenberg pursued Stresemann was, according to the latter, due to an unfounded suspicion of Hugenberg's that Stresemann had spoken against him in such a way that he had lost his position at Krupp's Works. Whatever the motives may have been—whether there were definite grounds for the campaign or whether it was the result of a long cherished hatred—Hugenberg's attitude was one of merciless personal enmity.

In the days when the fate of the Cabinet was in the balance, Hugenberg wrote: "Stresemann has a unique opportunity of becoming the bane of his country."

The fight, too, that Stresemann had to carry on in the sphere of international politics before he could be admitted to the confraternity of world-statesmen, to which he belonged *de facto* since Locarno, involved a descent from the heights that he had scaled in Locarno and in London. The petty scene of traffic over Germany's adhesion to the League of Nations followed immediately upon the London apotheosis.

The actual conception of the League of Nations belonged, so far as Germany was concerned, to the

hopelessly discredited ideologies of the victorious Powers. It belonged to the spiritual radius of Wilson's fourteen points, to the somewhat naïve attempts to adapt the complicated mechanism of the world to suit the crude and primitive political mentality of America. The whole German attitude of mind that demands a solid foundation of realities beneath a superimposed ideological structure, revolted against the system of the League, based as it was upon an illusory equality, on a deliberate self-deception as to the true balance of forces. "A League of Nations," said Stresemann himself on one occasion, "is intended to disguise the existing leagues among its members." The League's decision regarding Silesia, and its passive attitude at the time of the invasion of the Ruhr, also contributed to its unpopularity. In view of its past history, these junctures impressed themselves very strongly on Stresemann's mind; even when he was Foreign Minister he called attention to the weaknesses of the League, and his subsequent European policy made its deficiencies seem all the more patent. None the less, he came to the conclusion that Germany must join the League even before her adhesion had been made a pre-requisite of the Locarno Treaty. "We have no other platform from which we can address the world," he said in explanation of his attitude. But to reach that platform was to prove more difficult than he had thought.

While the conditions of Germany's admission to the League were being discussed in a succession of Notes, the gradually increasing composure in European relations was rudely shattered by the encounter between Stresemann and Mussolini. This was, indeed,

not so much a clash of interests as a sudden personal misunderstanding between the two leading statesmen. Public opinion in the two countries was aroused, feeling ran high, and provided the necessary background of animosity for the conflict between the two protagonists. In point of fact, however, it was not a spontaneous outbreak of a fire that had long been smouldering; it was a spark introduced from without that burst into a sudden blaze and died away as quickly, without leaving a trace behind.

One of the most persistent elements in the German mental outlook is the love of Italy. Side by side, indeed, with this yearning for the South, which is also strongly marked on the Slav soul, this passionate feeling for Italy penetrates the whole German character as the outward expression of a much more complicated aspiration. Every impulse of the northern peoples, these disinherited children of the sun, that is born of an ill-defined desire to escape from the dismal round of daily toil; every yearning for effortless fulfilment like the yearning for a past now haloed in a golden glow,—all our almost physical longing for warmth and light and placid loveliness, is embodied in what we mean by Italy. Thus it came about that the indignation against the attempts to suppress the Germanic element in Tirol assumed a much more violent form than the bitterness against Poland or Czecho-Slovakia. The spokesmen of the protest in German public life and in the German Press were for the most part of Austrian origin or susceptible to Austrian influences. Although Mussolini's campaign against the German element in Tirol was carried on in exactly the same way as the similar movements in Upper Silesia,

and German Bohemia, it almost seemed as though these latter wounds in the corporate entity of Germanism were less painful than others apparently less vital.

The situation was possibly aggravated by the fact that Italy had been more ready than the other victorious Powers to dissipate the war atmosphere; that from her had come the first voices of reconciliation—indeed she had been the first country to admit Germans once again. Nitti's friendly attitude after the war was reckoned against Mussolini's anti-German record. German hero-worship found a grateful object.

The German Left was not indeed carried away by the wave of indignation that swept through France, England, and the more enlightened circles in America. The suppression of freedom of thought was felt as acutely as the suppression of the German element, though here too the protest was not so strongly expressed as the feeling might have appeared to warrant, perhaps as a result of political reflection, and perhaps too from a certain respect for a great human phenomenon. Even in Stresemann's own case, though he had preserved his national sensitiveness intact through all his transformations, and his liberal sentiments revolted against the constraint of the censorship and the loss of personal freedom, the admiration he felt for Mussolini's strong personality prevailed over his misgivings at the means adopted by that statesman to make it felt. Mussolini had a strange attraction for Stresemann. The German, who with an almost boyish capacity for enthusiasm searched history for every manifestation of personality, often pondered over Mussolini with a combination of envy and

admiration. For years he looked forward to a long conversation with him, he pictured it to himself in all its details, and conceived it, very likely, as a dialogue between two heroic actors. It so happened that he was on terms of intimate personal friendship with the Italian Ambassador in Berlin, Count Alessandro de Bosdari. The Count was one of those direct successors of those universal men of the Renaissance who are so rarely to be met with in our less spacious age. The tall haggard figure with flashing eyes under dark arched Mephistophelean brows, large prominent nose, long face that terminated so naturally in a pointed beard, eternally tired and eternally bored, not infrequently brusque and unresponsive, pursued his nonchalant way through the world.

The fastidious aristocrat, half-diplomat and half-scholar, at first resented Stresemann's manner much more than the politically more far-sighted English Ambassador, and Bosdari's attitude was a more obvious one than that of his much more reserved colleague. But it was not long before the Italian, who had a firm grasp of the main currents of European politics, realised the creative force in Stresemann, and Carducci's disciple had formed a personal friendship with the admirer of Goethe. Stresemann often discussed with Bosdari the prospect of a meeting with Mussolini, which, in view of the international situation and the inevitable opposition, would have to take place in secret. On one occasion a meeting at San Remo was frustrated by the indiscretion of a journalist, another time it is alleged that Hindenburg himself intervened to induce Stresemann to forgo a visit to Rome. But all his curiosity and his intense interest in the Caesar who

had arisen from the people did not in any way affect the general direction of his policy. As early as December 1923, when the tension between Italy and Jugoslavia was very acute, Stresemann was sounded on behalf of Italy as to what attitude Germany would be likely to adopt in the event of a conflict. Various more or less authorised agents appeared in Berlin at the time and tried to convert him to the idea of a German-Italian alliance. Although, however, the offer was made just at the time of acute crisis in foreign politics, Stresemann did not for one instant succumb to the temptation to play this card against France. He knew that, whatever might be the advantages of a closer relation with another Power, whether Russia or Italy, in such an event Germany would find herself confronted by a phalanx of the Western Powers, and the way to Europe barred.

"Even Bismarck was not quite equal to such manœuvres, and they destroyed Caprivi; our age bears such a load of responsibility for the future of the nations, that this is no time for political jugglery." This refusal on grounds of principle to try the effects of a policy of bluff or balance, even at a moment when Germany was politically isolated, led Stresemann to reject the Roman offer in a courteous reply. "Germany," he explained; "is unfortunately an object, not a subject, in the sphere of foreign politics, and cannot claim to be a State capable of contracting alliances." Notwithstanding this refusal, the relations between Germany and Italy remained for the time excellent. Not until Rome began to make tentative overtures to France was the idea of a German alliance dropped. The rumours regarding the offer in Paris that were sent

up like *ballons d'essai* in the Italian Press, were greeted by Stresemann with deep anger. "If France," he said bitterly, "accepts Mussolini's offer, I shall make it officially known that the same offer was made to me two years ago."

France did not, indeed, accept the offer, but the conflict between Germany and Italy broke out very shortly afterwards. Pressure in South Tirol was intensified in the winter of 1925-26. False news in the papers—such as the reported removal of the statue of Walter von der Vogelweide from Bozen, and the prohibition of Christmas trees—appeared as punctually as the political wells are always poisoned when a crisis is approaching in the distance. This was the signal for the opening of a vigorous Press campaign, especially in Bavaria, to which Mussolini replied in a furious speech. In it the whole contempt of the southerner for the typical German of the caricatures found expression. The sneers at the Prussian-blue sky of the honeymoon couples, the black frock-coats and the tourist get-up of the German middle-class which overran Italy, wounded the passionate feelings of all pilgrims to that land, which Stresemann himself shared and indeed formed part of his spiritual constitution.

An anger born of stifled admiration boiled within him in those days, but it was his "cold fury" as his friends called it, a fury that was wholly kept in check, and even when it found utterance weighed every word for its effect.

His answering speech displayed the full extent of his mastery of political polemic that had so quickly matured. He did not reply to abuse with abuse or threat with threat, nor did he attempt to shout down

his leathern-lunged assailant; he answered cheap sneers with gentle irony, he answered the incitement of a nation with dignified reproof, and tried to strike down the enemy with his own weapons by refuting Mussolini with quotations from himself. He allowed himself only one sentence in which was concentrated all the revulsion of his feelings, and which referred to Mussolini's observations on the picturesque political episodes in Italian history. "I will not dispute—history itself will decide the point—whether a given stage in Italian development may prove to be an episode or an epoch." The speech was hailed with wild applause—Stresemann had already won for himself a position of respect; and even the grumblers of the corridors talked of a "statesmanlike performance."

The support that he secured for himself in his own country was to prove especially necessary in the months to come when his reputation had to stand the strain of the great failure in Geneva. Of all the *mises-en-scène* of the League of Nations, the negotiations over the admission of Germany was one of the most unfortunate. The demand of the German delegation for an absolute guarantee of a permanent seat on the council was not merely a tactical *sine quâ non*, but was made necessary by Germany's general attitude to the League. In order to overcome the discredit in which the League was held, some resounding political success was essential, as a sort of solatium for the signature of a compulsory insurance policy.

The restless confusion of the Geneva meeting in March was not a very encouraging prelude to German co-operation in the League. Stresemann returned from Geneva detesting the climate, disgusted with

the recalcitrant bureaucracy, full of contempt for the incompetence of the representatives to arrive at a solution. "If we—and by that I mean Chamberlain, myself, and Briand, could sit round a table with all those who put forward a claim, the difficulties would have been disposed of in an afternoon's sitting. The people in Geneva have spent weeks on the business and then failed." One thing Stresemann brought back with him from those troubled days in Geneva that served to comfort him in the atmosphere of failure of the weeks that followed; the firm establishment of his friendly relations with Briand. In a situation of incessant and extreme difficulty Briand had stood the test, and won Stresemann's admiring and almost affectionate gratitude. This atmosphere of confidence that grew up in those Geneva days helped him through an episode that in another and less favourable hour might have darkened the scene of European politics.

In the days when Germany, in something like a panic, had concluded the Treaty of Rapallo, the German Government also gave a verbal pledge that they would not enter the League without Russia. In the prolonged negotiations with Russia that preceded the signature of the Treaty of Locarno, the Russian representatives called attention to this promise by Germany; and they did their utmost to dissuade Germany from signing the Treaty of Locarno. They actually made use of the same weapon that had proved so useful at Rapallo. Tchitcherin began to talk about Warsaw, and dangled the spectre of a Russo-Polish alliance before the eyes of the German Government.

But Stresemann was not to be diverted by this attempt to checkmate one alliance by another. He saw

the constellation of Europe as a whole and he knew that it excluded the possibility of so unnatural an alliance as that between Poland and Russia; the Russian threats made no impression on him whatever. On the other hand he could not dissolve the Russian connection, for domestic rather than international reasons, no doubt. He accordingly promised the Russians that the Rapallo Treaty would be confirmed, and its scope extended, immediately after Germany's admission to the League of Nations. When he came back with empty hands, he was subjected to intenser pressure from the parties of the Right, who demanded an agreement in the East in compensation for the failure in the West. He tried to defer the decision until December, but Tchitcherin now began to talk a language that could not be misconceived—either an immediate signature of the new treaty or a determination of the Russian alliance. He rubbed his thin bloodless hands together and insisted that he could wait no longer; his pale face with its watery eyes, its red anæmic beard, a face that hardly knew the sun, had lost its sly appealing smile; it was hard and set, as though carved in pale green jade, as he stood before the representative of Germany. The German Ambassador in Moscow, Brockdorff-Rantzau, tall, thin almost to fragility, a sort of spectral E. T. A. Hoffmann, with his small, lined, white face that, like the Russian's, was only acquainted with the light of lighted rooms, came to Tchitcherin's aid with all his polished irresistible eloquence. For the weary, over-bred German, whom an hour of his country's bitterest need had called to a fateful responsibility, and who carried with him, like a disease, all his life, that humiliating wound of Versailles, there could

be no choice between West and East—for in his heart he would never have made peace with the West. He was drawn to Tchitcherin not merely by their similar way of life—they both preferred night to day—but also by their similar origin, the suddenness of their projection into the opposite camp, and their rope-dancer's delight in desperate methods. With his powerful support the Russian demand prevailed, and the Russo-German treaty of friendship was signed.

The so-called Treaty of Berlin really contained more explosive material than the Treaty of Rapallo had done,—the undertaking " de se concerter sur des affaires d'intérêt commun " would actually have aroused a greater sensation in Europe than was in fact produced by the break-up of the Genoa Conference. But in the meantime the wind had changed in Europe. It was no longer in the European interest to make Germany the unqualified scapegoat. When, therefore, the publication of the treaty exploded like a bomb among the unsuspecting embassies and legations in Berlin, when all the representatives of the Allied States had exclaimed against this betrayal of the Locarno spirit, two men laboured their utmost to allay the storm, two men who, all unconsciously, had constantly played into each others' hands—Briand and d'Abernon. To the English Ambassador, the Berlin Treaty might well have seemed a bitter blow, for his whole activity, first in Poland and then in Berlin, had been directed against Bolshevism, his efforts to save Germany were efforts to save Europe from the Red revolution. But d'Abernon's vision was never at fault in distinguishing between the essential and the unessential, he realised that the ominous clause would only acquire force and

significance if the understanding with the Western Powers came to nothing, and he was the only one among the foreign representatives in Berlin who maintained his unshakeable composure. To the astonishment of the foreign diplomatists, who had expected him to make an energetic protest, all their excitement left him utterly unmoved. He did magnificent work in keeping the peace, just as Briand in Paris applied all his vigorous eloquence to restraining a general outburst of indignation in the Press. Two men, in those days, set themselves to protect Stresemann, and by their efforts the menace of a revulsion in European policy did no more than dissipate itself in a feeble gesture of protest.

Scarcely had the echoes of this diplomatic intermezzo died away, than from an apparently clear sky, as though German politics were never to be allowed a breathing-space, there befell an event that led to the fall of the Cabinet. At a pleasant beer-evening given to the Press in the Prinz Leopold Palais, in an innocently agreeable atmosphere of cold buffet and empty beer glasses, it was suddenly observed that the members of the Cabinet had disappeared. On the ground floor an improvised Cabinet meeting was taking place to consider the promulgation of a measure which had long since been looming in the background, and when the Ministers again joined the journalists they had already been preceded by the astonishing rumour of a new decree on the subject of the National Flag. Even in the careless mood produced by such a cheerful gathering the journalists were aware that this apparently trifling ordinance would be something in the nature of a bombshell. The dispute over the flag question had

for a long while been the symbol of the inner political struggle to which it gave such pointed expression. Immediately after the revolution, Severing, in order to prevent so obvious and effectual a cleavage, had refused to give up the old Prussian colours, Ebert had retained the Song of Germany—but romantic recollections in Weimar had conjured up the black-red-golden dream once more.

The representatives of Germany abroad were constantly urging the Government to re-introduce the old colours for use in other countries, and public opinion was suddenly surprised by the unexpected news that the use of both flags was to be allowed. Stresemann himself, in whom the sense of the past was so very much alive, underestimated the opposition of the Left and the symbolic influence of the new flag on the champions of the Republic. Even the tactician Luther had miscalculated the importance of the problem, and he, the cool political strategist, was not pardoned for his error. All the sympathy that he had never won, all the geniality that he had never known how to bestow, all the friendships that he had never understood how to make, took their vengeance on him in that hour. He fell—though it was largely his own character and not the circumstances that brought him down—and Marx, with his agreeable smile, collected the fragments of the Government and reconstituted the Cabinet, the poorer now by various victims of popular indignation.

Meantime the secret negotiations over the admission of Germany to the League still proceeded. Attempts were made by interchange of Notes to remove the minor difficulties; but there was one man who insisted on meeting his opponents personally, in the

way which of late years had saved so much tedious and tortuous negotiation.

The main difficulty was still the claim of Poland, which was backed up by promises from France and England. This question, which had become so much a matter of prestige and aroused such highly sensitive national feeling, could very likely never have been settled by official methods; or at any rate, after weeks and months of discussion, an unsatisfactory solution would have left a bitter after-taste behind it. But it was disposed of in a few hours at a personal interview between Stresemann and Dr. Diamant, the Polish member of parliament.

Dr. Diamant, a former member of the Austrian parliament and one of the most eminent men in the Polish Socialist Party, was perhaps one of the first to assume, after the war, the ungrateful task of effecting a *rapprochement* between Germany and Poland. He was one of those who, like Haguenin, come upon a truth too soon, agonise in the pursuit of a crusade, and, like all the pioneers of history, are forgotten. He sprang from the great generation of militant Socialists, who were acquainted with martyrs but not ministers, his whole existence was one long protest against the oppression of the workers, against the recalcitrancy of the Right, and against the maltreatment and enslavement of Poland. He was one of those who react immediately to any injustice, just as old soldiers' limbs are stirred by the sound of a military march. But he was not merely a Pole and representative of the working man; he had been educated in the school of European politics as exemplified in the International Socialist Conferences,

which had produced men like Briand, Macdonald, Vandervelde and Friedrich Ebert. As, in addition to his other attainments, he possessed a thorough knowledge of industrial and financial policy, shortly after the foundation of the Polish State he was sent to negotiate the first commercial treaty between Germany and Poland.

He contended for a better relation between the two peoples with the same weapons of ruthless candour and merciless wit that spared neither friend nor foe, of contempt for prestige and prejudice, that had stood him in such stead in the most difficult moments of his life. When national prejudice got the upper hand, he, who hated compromise, withdrew—already a sick man but with his force of will unimpaired—to carry on the campaign against the dictatorship in his own country.

In the late summer of 1926 he went to Wildungen to see Stresemann. He was not a typical negotiator equipped with irreproachable manners and an equally irreproachable draft of a treaty. He did not favour Stresemann with a comprehensive sketch of Polish history as a basis of his country's claim ; he sat down opposite his host, leaning somewhat carelessly forward, with the eternal cigarette under his fair drooping moustache, and the look of those wise blue eyes in that lined face was the look of one who sought and strove to find, not the blank gaze of one who has come with a completed solution of the problem. In this personal and private conversation a way out was found that satisfied the two countries ; the Geneva bureaucracy settled the incidental questions, and in September 1926 the German delegation was able to go to Geneva.

The reception at Geneva was, as it turned out, a prodigious triumph for Stresemann. Sky and lake sparkled in the sunshine of a glorious day. A genial and excited crowd thronged the small provincial station where so many great personages had stepped on to the platform. There were present not merely the official representatives of the railway, not merely the journalists, and the inevitable and menacing press of photographers with their brandished tripods and their film cameras like rattling machine guns. The Ministers accredited to Berlin, who had come to Geneva as members of their delegations, turned up in full force to welcome Germany's Foreign Minister. The anonymous intermediary between Germany and France, Professor Hesnard, stood on the platform with a smile of joyful expectation on his face, that brought the stub of his cigarette in even more dangerous proximity to his lips than usual; the representatives of Switzerland, of the Canton of Geneva, and of France, were jostled by the impatient crowd, and duly impressed with the seriousness of the occasion, for on that day a miracle happened: the dignified citizens of Geneva remembered the League of Nations and curiosity drove them to the railway station. The German Foreign Minister in his grey suit and soft hat, with the face of a typical lower middle-class German, disappointed the crowd who had never seen him before; but as his vivid gaze ranged over the throng, his radiant smile flashed across his face in answer to the shouts of welcome, and his hand reached out in winning gesture of friendliness to someone who stood modestly aloof, a surge of human kindness and a roar of cheers rose up from the crowd,

and gave utterance to a quite personal regard for the latest visitor to Geneva. "Briand did not get such a welcome as this," observed one of the Delegation statisticians, as the open car, with its little gaily flickering Imperial flags, drove into the silver-blue city.

The Hall of the Reformation, which looked like an enormous warehouse or a Salvation Army assembly-room, wore the aspect of a great occasion. Even the Swiss police were aroused from their customary calm and were nervously strict in their scrutiny of passes. Newspaper men were clambering about the Press galleries and perching like doves on the steep benches; a rustle of papers accompanied the Babylonian hum of voices, and even the very great ones of the Press were observed with an unwonted note-book and pencil in their hands. In the public galleries was such a glitter and a flutter as though a covey of birds of paradise had swooped down upon the hall; women in bright summer dresses and an incessant flicker of little coloured fans, for the air in the room was heavy with heat. A glance over the brilliant moving throng revealed familiar faces. "There is Wilson's widow," went a whisper through the crowd; "over there, in the first row.... And there is Frau Stresemann—yes, that pretty young woman with the fair-haired son...."

But suddenly a silence fell, as when the conductor of a gigantic orchestra raises his baton over the buzzing instruments before him. The German delegation solemnly entered the hall: Schubert, square-shouldered, stooping, flushed—Gauss, his fine-cut face rigid like a gem . . . but the crowd did not wait for the appearance of the rest of the delegation, they broke into unwonted, and indeed unauthorised, applause,

for which Briand gave the signal. In alphabetical order, as had been proposed by the French, the delegation took their places in the first rows; all heads were thrust forward, all eye-glasses and binoculars were turned eagerly in the one direction. A few assiduous secretaries were still hurrying about the hall, here and there someone ran up to shake Stresemann by the hand—there was still a hum of voices and a buzz of film cameras, when the somewhat harsh Slav French of the President of the seventh Assembly of the League, Nintchitch, uttered the prelude to Stresemann's breathlessly awaited first appearance. He stood at last on the unaccustomed tribune, rather wooden and stiff as he always was when feeling oppressed by the significance of an occasion. His first sentences were rather hurried and a little indistinct. He was hoarse from excitement, the sultry heat weighed upon his limbs like lead, the unfamiliar acoustics of the place, in addition to the loud-speakers, played havoc with his voice and exaggerated its rise and fall; but what was most damaging to the free display of his eloquence was the manuscript that he had to hold in his hand—he, who could only speak unprepared. However, it was not long before he overcame these disadvantages and held the company by the vivid force of his emotion and the sincerity of his conviction.

It was no political oration that Stresemann addressed to that assemblage, no settlement with the past such as many expected from him, nor any analysis of the present—it was an attempt to bridge the cleavage between a strong and just feeling of nationality and the postulate of world-interests that this super-state

set before humanity; and, most of all, it was a mighty adjuration to the future.

"The task of the existing generation is to fix their eyes upon the present and look towards the future," said Gustav Stresemann at the beginning of his speech, and then went on to speak of the new tasks that lay before the nations, which had been brought to light by the ravages of the war, of the passing of the older forms of industry and the creation of new ones that transcend all frontiers and make new demands on international co-operation. "More important than any material event is the spiritual life of the nations. The peoples of the earth are now caught in a ferment of ideas. Some stand for the principle of national exclusion and repudiate any international understanding because they are unwilling to replace what they have grown to understand as national, and peculiar to themselves, by the general idea of humanity. I am of opinion that no nation which belongs to the League of Nations thereby surrenders anything of its individuality. The divine architect of the earth has not fashioned mankind as a uniform whole. He gave the peoples different blood-streams, he gave them their mother-tongue as the sanctuary of their souls, and he gave them for their homes lands of different earth. But it cannot be the intention of a divine world-order that men should turn their most precious national gifts against each other, and thereby throw back the spiritual advancement of the world. He will serve humanity the best who, rooted in his own people, develops its spiritual and intellectual inheritance to its highest significance, and thus, passing beyond the limits of his own race, is able to give something to

humanity as a whole, as the great men of all nations have done, whose names are written down in the history of humanity. As nations and mankind can unite upon the spiritual plane, so also they can unite in political endeavour, if the will is there to serve the cause of common progress in this sense."

The audience, which followed his words in a tense silence, even those who were only half-conversant with the language, and strove to pierce beyond the complexity of the long and involved sentences to the purpose of his thought, realised that they were not listening to any fine-drawn literary phrases but to an individual experience, the result of a man's struggle with his own conscience. They felt that not merely hundreds of thousands of Germans, but millions in all lands were thus struggling with themselves, and that the destiny of the world would be secure if that fight ended in an inner peace.

The way to which Stresemann pointed as balanced between national self-preservation and the international need for world-community, was no narrow steep intellectual path for the leaders of mankind who found it for themselves, but a broad road for common men, from whose ranks he himself had risen and whose thoughts and feelings he could so easily understand. He gave that company in Geneva no new spiritual conclusion, he made their souls no richer by any new experience, but his words reached the great masses, struck deeply into the heart of youth, and saved many from the strife between what they felt by instinct and tradition—and what the new age forced them to feel. Perhaps Stresemann's most important characteristic was his gift for finding obvious unambiguous phrases

that solitary spiritual leaders miss because their way has led them too far from the battlefield of political passions. Free from this aversion to the obvious that isolates the intellectual from his own people and leaves the field in the possession of revolutionaries and agitators, Stresemann had the courage to utter the simple truths that are necessary to life and decide the destinies of man. It was the emotion that went forth from that hall, the feeling that something was happening that lifted men above the commonplace struggle of conflicting interests, that gave birth to the League's great hour. A man was at hand, a born tribune of the people, who could absorb this emotion, who felt to his very finger-tips the stirrings of those hearts, and, alike an instrument and a creator, drew from what he felt and enlarged that hour into an unforgettable experience.

Briand's voice echoed through the hall and seemed to fill it to the roof beams. For an instant it was as though the voice came from the very heart of that hall, as though it were the voice of the multitude bursting forth from burdened hearts in a cry of liberation. The experience upon which he touched was an experience of millions, the emotion that he roused to agony was the same for millions—the inhuman misery which the war had inflicted upon humanity. It was not his words alone, the simple words in which he spoke of the blood-soaked battle-fields of the world, of the lamentations of mothers, but the passion with which he poured them forth until they seemed to hover in the room like visible and blood-filled presences, that made them speak with the voice of humanity.

"Quelle espérance pour les peuples et pour les mères, et comme j'en connais qui après cette journée reposeront leurs yeux sur leurs petits enfants, sans sentir leurs cœurs se serrer d'angoisse."

Everything that every single human being had suffered in those years of madness, every death that anyone had mourned, every tear that a mother had wept, the entire stream of individual fate and torment, seemed to find utterance in that voice, and in its very extremity of lamentation, to bid farewell to the past.

"Messieurs, la paix, c'est la signification de ce jour —pour l'Allemagne et la France, cela veut dire ; c'est fini, la série de rencontres douloureuses et sanglantes, dont toutes les pages de l'histoire sont tachées dans le passé ; c'est fini la guerre entre nous ; c'est fini les longs voiles de deuil sur les souffrances qui ne s'apaiseront jamais sur la surface de nos pays ; plus de guerres, plus de solutions brutales, violentes, sanglantes, pour régler nos différends qui, certes, n'ont pas disparu. Désormais, c'est le juge qui dira le droit. Arrière les fusils, les mitrailleuses, les canons ! Place à la conciliation, à l'arbitrage, à la paix !"

C'est fini la guerre—

Thrice repeated—like a salute to peace, the words soared up to heaven.

C'est fini . . . A pæan of fulfilment, an ecstasy of liberation.

. . . .

A man was standing on the tribune, a man of no great stature, with wide-opened shadowed mouth, brandishing his short arms in the air, gesticulating wildly with spread fingers, and shaking his head with

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its shock of disordered hair; but in his staring eyes was the reflection of an apocalyptic vision.

Was it possible that only one man was speaking? Surely every one of that company was making a public confession and crying to the world his oath of peace? . . . Women's sobs broke into the miracle of that great voice—behind it could be heard the tense breathing of the listeners, and the sound of hands gripping the wooden balustrades; tears poured down the hardest faces and cleansed their souls from all bitterness.

It was the greatest hour of Briand's life; he spoke for each and all, he lent his voice to all the peoples of the earth and with it he redeemed all those myriad individuals from the constraint of their petty destinies, and won for himself the affection of the world. When he came down from the tribune, himself still shaken by the emotions he had roused, the audience looked up as though they were awakening from a dream. The spell that had held them was suddenly shattered when the voice of the interpreter broke in, the delegates dashed towards the doors; only Stresemann sat for a while in his place, brooding on the significance of that hour.

. . . .

After the prelude that introduced the Germans to Geneva, it was not difficult for them to secure their position. The glory of that great day was still about them, and all their activities were eagerly observed; moreover, their reputation for efficiency and organising capacity, which had preceded them, lent their work in the Commissions an especial weight. But that sense of exaltation would, like all exceptional emotions,

soon have passed away, had not Stresemann won the heart of Geneva—the heart of the world represented in that city. Geneva was soon aware that this was a simple man without a trace of pose, who in spite of his apparent stiffness of demeanour, his metallic voice, the conventional correctness of his clothes, adapted himself from the very first to the spirit of ease and comradeship in which these great events were taking place. When, after the first meeting, he walked towards the door, erect and rigid, with his elbows pressed against his sides, respectfully accompanied by his secretary, and made his way through the surging throng in the corridors and vestibules, no sooner was he out of the building than he turned into the little tea-room of the Hotel Victoria, that stands, like an annexe to a provincial pension, in comical proximity to the world theatre. He peered into the small, somewhat stuffy room in which a few tables stood against the faded walls. He walked up to a table at which the foreign editor of the *Petit Journal* was sitting, Marcel Ray, whom he knew very well in Berlin. "Will you give me a cup of tea?" he asked, "I think I have deserved it." So saying, he sat down, wiped the great drops of sweat from his forehead, and blinked at the Frenchman with an air of satisfaction.

"It was a great speech, Herr Minister," began Marcel Ray. . . .

"Do you really think so?" broke in Stresemann, beaming at him. "Of course it was not up to Briand's—no one can compare with him. And when I have a manuscript in my hand I am like a dog on a chain. Those were fine times when I could make up my own speeches from A to Z. Now it's a case of

Stresemann tea diluted with Gauss—well, I daresay the world finds it more wholesome."

His ringing laughter shook the ancient window panes. By this time there was a little inquisitive group at the door watching the German Foreign Minister conversing with the French journalist. They saw him carefully extract a cigar from his case, clip it lovingly, produce a paper holder, adjust the cigar between his lips with those slim fingers of his, light it with all proper deliberation and care, and finally fling his head back, blowing great comforting clouds of smoke in front of him. His huge laugh sounded more and more unconstrained—indeed, he let himself go without troubling to notice whether there were any long-eared journalists about; and as he appeared on that first day, so he showed himself in all those weeks at Geneva whenever his work or his duties as German Delegate gave him leisure. The Genevan equality between statesmen, journalists, and observers, that was partly due to restricted space and partly to the new methods of co-operation, became, by his influence, friendlier, more natural, and more profitable. Late of an evening when Briand, anxiously guarded by his faithful satellite Peycelon, disappeared into his hotel room at Bergues, when Chamberlain withdrew from the gaze of common mortals into the fastness of the Hotel Beaurivage, Stresemann sought contact with people from whom he was cut off by his daily work. The small smoky tavern called the "Bavaria," hardly more than a narrow passage-way between two doors, was exalted by him into the unofficial rendezvous of Genevan diplomacy. There he sat on a narrow bench, at a primitive table on which stood a rising pile

of beer-saucers; his own caricature looked down upon him from the wall. The crowd around him grew larger as the evening progressed; here were members of delegations, in evening dress and glittering with decorations, on their way home from an official reception, journalists hoarse from long distance telephone conversations, the inevitable artist crouching in a corner, Breitscheid's tall silhouette towering in the doorway beside Grumbach's short squat figure; editors of warring newspapers sat side by side and drank each others' health—a roar of laughter—a joke went the round—a political argument flamed up into a quarrel . . . but above all the noise and laughter and disputes rose Stresemann's voice and transformed this absurd little tavern, this throng of people, this casual good-fellowship, into a tribune of the world.

The German Foreign Minister soon lost his title in this atmosphere of unconstraint, and shortly afterwards he found he had sacrificed his surname into the bargain. His friends spoke of Gustav when they wanted to guard against indiscreet ears, the delegation messengers began to talk about Gustav, the journalists discussed Gustav, until one day the word reached the streets, and newspaper boys who caught sight of him, dug each other in the ribs and said: "As-tu vu Gustave?"

Gustav Stresemann held the centre of the Geneva stage, and had gathered all the former chief actors at his side. Beyond Geneva, beyond the world-echo of the journalists, he won the hearts of all the world.

XI

THOIRY—THE UNRIPENED HARVEST

It began like an American film. One day the news ran like wildfire round Geneva that a decisive conversation was to take place between the German and French Foreign Ministers. The American journalists fell into a great state of excitement. They knocked at every door, pestered everyone in contact with Briand and Stresemann, tried by entreaties and by guile, by bribing servants and by asking secretaries to dinner, to discover the place of meeting. But they were met with the evasive answers and the mysterious smiles that the subordinates had learned from their masters. They were in despair. Never before had they been confronted with such complete discretion. However, if their entreaties availed nothing they must get what they wanted by force. From early morning a car was waiting at the entrance of the Hotel des Bergues, and another—for safety's sake—outside the Metropole. In each car sat four or five of them, each one with a different plan of campaign, on the merits of which he was prepared to argue with much emphasis. At last Briand appeared with Hesnard and got into a car. At the same moment Stresemann, with the Councillor of Legation Feine, came out of the door of his hotel. The two cars drove down the avenue leading to the lake, with the two journalists' cars roaring in their wake. In one of them stood, gesticu-

lating with excitement, the corpulent Weyer of the Universal News Service, who owed his fame to the fact that he shrank from no means that enabled him to force his way into the presence of the most inaccessible statesman, or witness a sensational event. Suddenly the two cars—one carrying the German colours and the other a tricolour—stopped by the shore of the lake. A motor-boat lay waiting for the Ministers; the journalists cursing and swearing, were left behind. At this out-of-the-way spot no boat was to be found. They held a noisy and excited council of war, dashed back to the city and re-appeared in a motor-boat; but the Ministers had vanished. They scoured every likely resort in the neighbourhood—but in vain; in a savage fury they returned to the city. The telephone was set into feverish activity—Evian—Aix-les-Bains? Where could these two have hidden themselves? An event of world-importance was taking place and the world-press was not there—these fellows had been too damned cunning. It was remarked that both of them understood something of journalism. Well, they had lost "a great story," and their anger was tempered by a faint feeling of admiration. Meantime the motor-boat put in at a lonely spot, where the two cars were waiting. The journey was continued by road, over the frontier to the god-forsaken little village which owes its historic fame solely to the Père Léger's good cooking.

At the door of the shabby little inn stood the eighty-year-old landlord with his son and daughter-in-law. A tall gnarled peasant with cheerful twinkling eyes who was far from looking his age, he bowed to his guests with the stiff independence of the Jura peasant, and

reached out a cramped and gouty hand to Briand. The two Ministers walked up the steep steps to the little dining-room where they were invisible to any chance arrival. Opposite the wide window-recess was a stretch of rolling vineyard land, above it a pale blue sky faintly touched with silver, the edge of which was broken by an azure line of hills. A dusty golden glow poured into the room, discreetly veiling the worn and poisonously pink walls, the chipped vases on the mantelshelf, and the smoke-covered fly-blown ceiling.

Stresemann looked mistrustfully at the mean room, the coarse crockery, the primitive cutlery, and silently wondered why the place had been chosen.

Briand rubbed his hands in satisfaction over their flight, and Stresemann's laugh rang out in almost boyish delight at the success of the stroke that they had played upon the journalists. It seemed like the prelude to an adventure, an escape from an ordered and conventional world.

The landlord's excellent wife now sent in to them a succession of courses that put in the shade the most distinguished restaurants of the capitals of Europe. Slices of marvellous hot sausage, baked trout, partridges flavoured with rosemary, mushrooms in cream sauce, ducklings with slices of orange, and many dishes that the German had never met, to which, however, Briand with his expert knowledge knew how to do full justice. The wine, a subject which Stresemann understood rather better than culinary pleasures, had a fragrance as of strange fruits and a faint glow that recalled the veiled sunshine of that landscape. He let it pass meditatively over his tongue, and as he surveyed the man opposite him who was dilating on

the excellencies of the cooking, he understood more of the deliberate French attitude to life, and the part played in that country by the pleasures of this world, than he had ever before realised. Briand explained to him at length how the Americans were everywhere destroying French cooking, and how they had even extended their invasion to the names of dishes; the phrase, for instance, "Homard à l'Américaine" was quite erroneous, it should be "à l'Armoricaine," as this method of preparing a lobster originated in Armorica. For a while the conversation followed a zigzag course of anecdote. Briand produced many strange incidents from his store of recollections and made Stresemann roar with laughter. Geneva acquaintances were mentioned, and destroyed in a biting phrase—for the two men were on the threshold of a great experience and each was talking to cover his agitation.

Not until coffee appeared, when Stresemann had lit his cigar with his usual ceremony, Briand was twisting a cigarette in his slender fingers, and the landlord and his people had left the room, did they start the real conversation for which they had met together in this place. The play of anecdote had already lost its vivacity under the burden of anticipation. The task that they had set themselves was to master the political and industrial chaos that remained as a legacy of the war; the work at which their hands were to labour was the moulding of the destinies of Europe.

They both knew that the future of their countries depended on the speed with which it was possible to sweep away the wreckage of the war and begin the peaceful work of reconstruction. The sooner they could find a way back to normality and order, and

adapt their communities to the new conditions, the more confident they might be that the two nations would hold their own in the exhausting struggle with the industrial forces of the New World. The disguised war in time of peace—a war that had caused almost as much loss in industrial assets and human existences as the bloody struggle in the trenches, had ended only at Locarno. But if Locarno was, so to speak, an armistice in this bloodless war, Thoiry was to be a definite treaty of peace, the prelude to a new age. The war liabilities which they were there to negotiate were, on the one hand, the desperate economic condition of France, and, on the other, the occupation of German territory by foreign troops. Measures must be taken to put an end to both these situations. Stresemann felt that the question at issue was not so much the relief of the Rhine provinces, a few years sooner, from the indignity of occupation, but the recovery of Germany's position among the Great Powers, the return to normal life, and the organic reconstruction of the country. Such a speeding-up of national development would be worth a few sacrifices —indeed they would be more than equalised by the quickened process of advancement. For him, who at the outset of his career had spoken of the primacy of politics, the complete recovery of German sovereignty would not be too dearly bought by a temporary strain on the national finances. Briand, who was so often in intellectual advance of his country, was well aware that the Rhine pledge held by France diminished daily in value, and that it was highly desirable it should be realised as soon as possible. But there was more to consider than the support of the franc by the sale of

German railway bonds, and the revitalisation of French industry. He knew that the only way out for France was a *rapprochement* with Germany. He who had embodied the idea of peace in the most moving and impressive phrases, had not, however, become a pacifist from pure emotional indignation against the horrors of war. The pitiless clarity of his mind combined the problems into a single unequivocal formula. There are only two kinds of policy, the policy of war and the policy of peace. A policy of war had bled France white in the process of winning that war. From a country that lived in peace on the proceeds of her labour, she had become a Power dependent on her American creditor. If she were to free herself from the fetters of this form of modern servitude, she must seek agreement and co-operation with her nearest neighbour, Germany. For a man like Briand, who in his eventful career had seen many Governments come and go, who in the short span of a human life had amassed more experiences than any of his contemporaries, who had so often reached power, let it slip, and then grasped it again more firmly than ever, who desired no more for himself because life had given him everything, sated as he was with disappointment so that fate could bring him no bitterness that he had not tasted—there was no other alternative. Without faith, without illusion, without other ambition than his own work, he was possessed by one conviction and one only—the necessity for constructing a future federation of the world. He found himself confronted by a man who from quite other premises and from a totally different point of departure, had reached the same conclusion. One, because he had worn out all

faiths, the other because he was inspired by a single flaming faith ; one, because he had trodden other ways and now saw only one before him, the other, because his own inner impulse drove him along the only way that offered any possibility of constructive work. Both had to cross the frontier of their own land if they were to find their way to Europe.

The vast outlines of the future hovered before their eyes as they discussed the questions outstanding between the two countries. They were both of them rather tyros in the sphere of finance, and figures aroused somewhat indefinite conceptions in their minds, but Stresemann had prepared himself for so important a conversation, and had obtained from his expert advisers a general notion of Germany's capacity for payment. As the result of a broad discussion of the possibilities of a complete settlement, which seemed the only means of removing the last war wreckage that lay in the path of a Franco-German understanding, a number of precise proposals were ultimately formulated. To provide the necessary sum for the support of the French franc, bonds to the amount of 1500 million marks were to be negotiated, of which 52 per cent, *i.e.* approximately 780 millions, were to be set aside for French account.

In addition to the settlement of the Reparations problem, Stresemann touched upon another question that lay very near his heart—the return of the Saar to Germany. The separation of the Saar was for him one of the wounds on which he brooded with the bitterest pain and regret. When, in May of 1926, he received the Saar choir of singers in Berlin, he demolished with unusual vehemence the current but unfounded rumour that there had been a suggestion by the Foreign Office

that the occupation of the Saar might be shortened and the mines bought back more cheaply by a transfer of certain districts of the Saar to France. "Once and for all I state most solemnly that Germans and German earth are independent of material things. I also state that the population of the Saar are not to be regarded as an appendage of the Saar mines. It may be clearly understood that the whole policy of the Government—not merely regarding the Saar but the whole occupied area, our beloved German Rhineland—is concentrated on shortening the period for which it has to endure a foreign occupation."

"For the freedom of the Saar, no material sacrifices are too great for us, Herr Briand,"—he said at Thoiry—and offered the sum of 300 million gold marks for the repurchase of the Saar district. He then described to Briand his tedious negotiations with Belgium over the return of Eupen-Malmedy to Germany, which were wrecked by the Belgian demand for the replacement of the marks circulated in Belgium during the war. "I never let anyone interfere with my policy," observed Briand; "all sorts of people, believe me, have tried to make me go the way they wanted—I have been supplied with files of evidence of German defaults, all of which I have flung into the waste-paper basket. You aren't the only one to suffer from pedantic officials, we have plenty of them at home; the only thing is to pay them no attention. But they worry me with their Stahlhelm. Your people are so self-important—and they feel like nothing on earth when they have clapped a helmet on their heads." To which Stresemann: "You misjudge them; that's just an innocent popular instinct. Our Reichswehr Minister

Gessler found the right explanation for these people. They want to be able to offer the servant girls as much as the soldiers ever did—military bands, gay uniforms, and last but not least, kisses."

Briand burst into a roar of laughter. How easily all misunderstandings are resolved, how quickly all obstacles are removed, when it is possible to withdraw to a slightly higher standpoint and contemplate humanity a little from above. The two men had merely to shut their eyes to the trifling blemishes in the relations between their countries and concentrate upon essentials. The Frenchman came back to the point from which he had started, his anxiety for the future, which in him overshadowed all the preoccupations of the present. "If we do not hold together we shall be eaten up by foreign capital. Look at the preponderance of commercial interests and industrial concerns. They will soon be dictating our policy—which just suits your purpose. We politicians must not let the leadership be taken out of our hands." The conception of European solidarity, which he first brought forward three years later at Geneva, was already in his mind as he sat in the little dining-room of that frontier inn. As he got up and shook Stresemann's hand in farewell—shook it long and warmly, he added with a laugh: "Well, it is lucky we agree; if we did not, the American bankers would pull our shirts off our backs."

. . . .

As evening was falling they both drove back to Geneva. It was not until Stresemann got into the car and the fresh breeze began to cool his flushed forehead that he realised the strain through which he passed that

day. He saw accomplishment within his grasp. A surge of exaltation swept over him; his way was the right one, it must be right, since it led towards the goal. But now an infinite weariness came upon him and he felt utterly exhausted. He had spent himself to the very limit in that discussion; a paralysing weakness gripped his limbs, and his heart was hammering furiously. As he entered the vestibule of the hotel, terribly pale in the harsh light, he groped in front of him with outstretched arms like a blind man. The German delegates were waiting anxiously in the hall. They ran to meet him—he waved them away, his blue pallid lips could scarcely form a word. Bernhard was suddenly at his side, summoned by some foreboding of the truth. He grasped the tottering figure under the arms and led him to the lift. Stresemann leaned on him with almost the entire weight of his body. He closed his eyes, he could see little but a confusion of revolving black and gold circles. "Call Dr. Schulmann," cried Bernhard, in a voice sharp with anxiety. The doctor was soon at the Minister's bedside, feeling his pulse, which was racing wildly; raised against the pillows was a green and pallid face with pitiably closed eyes. The effort of that conversation had brought on a severe heart attack. Fate decreed that on the very day that Stresemann regarded as the happiest of his life, when he savoured the achievement of what he had so passionately desired, he was to receive the first serious warning that this achievement must be paid for with his life.

But the incorrigible optimist within him did not understand the warning. When the heart had been stimulated and the paralysing weakness had passed,

all the old gaiety came back into his face. "It was a little too much for me," he said soothingly to the anxious doctor, "but I'm all right now. I'll just rest for a bit." He shut his eyes again, and neither the doctor nor Bernhard noticed that his face had the hypocritical look of a schoolboy who is up to some knavery. "You must sleep now, Herr Minister, I will have some food sent to your room in half an hour." "Excellent," replied Stresemann with a nod, apparently now half-asleep, and a smile was on his lips as the door shut behind them. An hour later, as Bernhard and the doctor were sitting at dinner in the hotel restaurant, he came down the staircase in evening dress and a shining white shirt-front, with a twinkle of satisfaction in his eye, to go out to a dinner party. He waved to some members of his delegation, who were still waiting, and dropped into the hall chairs in their astonishment, and cried as he went out: "I shall be back at twelve, and I shall expect you gentlemen fot an informal conference."

The joy of that day worked on him like a narcotic. When he came back from his dinner, he gave the assembled delegates a brief sketch of the main features of the Thoiry interview, and then went on to the "Bavaria" to drink a glass of beer with his faithful companions.

When he got to bed at last, he slept a long and dreamless sleep until midday, which gave him back his strength; after which, he dictated to Bernhard some notes of this important conversation, to be drafted in duplicate, one copy for the Foreign Office, and one, as was his custom in the case of all momentous interviews, to be kept by himself.

After luncheon he lay down again, and slept—through the hellish din of the Geneva traffic thundering over the cobble-stones under his window, and all the turmoil of hotel corridors that died down from time to time in a volley of slamming doors. It was not for nothing that he had once underlined the remark in a volume of Napoleon's maxims: "Nature gave me a wonderful gift—the power of sleeping in any place and at any time."

When Stresemann returned to Berlin he had to face a number of difficulties raised by the Foreign Committee of the Reichstag, which thought it doubtful policy to prejudice the general settlement of the Reparations question by mobilising the first marketable share. Even in the Ministry of Finance—and perhaps the Agent for Reparations was not innocent of these objections—a protest was made against the danger of raising so enormous a sum, but Stresemann overwhelmed these misgivings with all the weight of his eloquence, and supported his proposed arrangement with such a sacred glow of conviction, that he proved, in the end, irresistible. He then formed a committee of which he himself became chairman, the other members being the President of the Reichsbank and the Ministers of Commerce and Finance. A horde of high officials of the three Ministries meantime worked out the proposals, which quickly assumed an intelligible form under Stresemann's insistent urge for haste. At the beginning of October a French expert was to come to Berlin to discuss the scheme.

Amid all this feverish activity news came from America which threw Stresemann into the deepest consternation. A high official of the Foreign Office,

who was at the moment in the United States, was instructed by telegram to test the temper of the American money market. The reply was extremely discouraging. The leading financiers told the German emissary almost with one voice that the mobilisation of bonds in favour of France was not to be thought of so long as that country had not ratified her debt settlement. Stresemann's delight at the prospective achievement of his hopes received its first cold douche. But his optimism was not to be checked. "France must ratify the settlement sooner or later. . . . It will only be more difficult for Briand to get the Thoiry proposals adopted," he added a moment or two afterwards. Meantime October came and went and the negotiator did not arrive. Stresemann began to grow uneasy. He caused inquiries to be made in Paris by the intermediaries who had hitherto kept him in touch with Briand and received an evasive reply. Then began his great struggle to secure the fulfilment of the Thoiry plan. But months—nay years—were to pass before he realised that Thoiry was an unripened harvest, an attempt at achievement before the time had come.

XII

IN SMOOTHER WATERS

WHEN Stresemann came back from Geneva, his success had preceded him and heightened hopes accompanied his return. The change in his position which had set in a few months before, was now complete. He suddenly began to move in an atmosphere in which it was easy to breathe.

What was perhaps the happiest time of his life now began. He who was used to so much opposition nearly always found his way clear before him. Success had done him justice, and, in the French phrase, everyone hurried to the help of victory. The loud-mouthed attacks of the Right grew gradually silent; any sign of criticism was forthwith suppressed by a sharp retort. Other countries had discovered the greatest German statesman and praised him to the skies, and every German felt himself exalted and honoured in Stresemann's person. It suddenly looked as though disloyal friends had never existed, as though he had never met with opposition in his own party and the Left had never lost confidence in him, and as though there had been from the very outset many thousand prophets of his greatness in Germany.

The change was too imperceptible for him to be able to say that he had awakened one morning to find himself famous, but every day brought reminders of the —to him—new and wonderful fact of his celebrity.

In December came the outward sign of his estimation by the world; his work was crowned by the award of the Nobel prize. All the fine and delightful things that success and its assurance can bring, were his in those days. He was, indeed, a good deal beset by admiration, for the fame that burst so noisily upon him, spoke with the somewhat raucous tones in which Berlin, a city at once most niggardly and lavish of her recognition, trumpets forth the greatness of her favourites of a day.

The prospect of success stretched out before him. Yet he, whom defeat and hatred and misconception could never move from his purpose, was impervious to the more vulgar kinds of fame. But his sensitive nature blossomed forth in the atmosphere of warmth that now surrounded him; he became simpler, easier and more forthcoming in his intercourse with people, more cheerful and confident, and his attitude to the great questions of the world was one of almost devotional awe. Much that was loud, aggressive, and exaggerated, fell away from him. He grew less susceptible, less disposed to misinterpret an action, a word or a gesture. The great kindliness of the man now came out; he put aside suspicion and was hardly ever ruffled. His life which he had hitherto lived in a fragmentary way, in the breathing-spaces between Government crises, harried by international negotiations, and prevented from pursuing his course by eternal hindrances and set-backs, now for the first time, when he could reckon on days or even weeks of continuous work, assumed its real aspect.

The spiritual elements that were so inextricably interwoven in his character, could develop more

freely, and relatively unhindered, as a completion of his political activity, a condition which was to him a necessity of life. The former Baden statesman, Hellpach, whom Stresemann regarded as the type of intellectual politician that he particularly admired, describes, in an obituary notice of Stresemann, a scene which gives a key to the understanding of this side of his nature, which found in purely intellectual labour, in absorption in the past, in untroubled self-communion, the creative strength for his labours in the service of the present, and his intense realisation of it and its needs. "I remember once," writes Hellpach, "hearing a well-meaning professor express his surprise in an after-dinner speech, that any man could guide the destinies of Germany and still find time to deliver learned and elaborate addresses on Goethe and Napoleon. Stresemann rose like a berserker and asked how a man could do the one if he could not do the other. It was, of course, not a fair retort; but regarding, as Stresemann did, education and the intellect as the conditions of creative labour, the words threw a flood of light on his character."

Stresemann's literary and historical labours were not a dilettante amusement, like Ingres' performances on the violin, intended for hours of relaxation, nor did he imagine that he was making important contributions to the study of Goethe or Napoleon; they provided the spiritual stimulus that he needed for his active life, and helped to shape the thoughts evoked in his mind by the problems of the world of to-day.

Each one of these studies—Goethe and Napoleon, Goethe's relation to the Wars of Freedom, and even the literary feud that he contested with Wolfgang

Goetz, was for him an attempt to come to terms with the time of transition in which he found himself, and to discover its true aspect behind the conflict between Yesterday and To-morrow. His relation to To-day was obvious in almost every word he wrote, and it was just this connection with the Present that gave its value to his interpretation of it. Gustav Stresemann, who had entered upon life with an inheritance of spiritual romanticism, observed the chaotic and disrupted world of to-day from the simplifying perspective of a much more harmonious and unified world. But at the same time his active life involved him in all the ferment and confusion of a time of transition from a State edifice that had fallen to another that was not yet secure, a time when the price of war had been paid and the way was set for peace; he had watchful eyes for everything that went on about him, and a sensitive intuition of the course that events would take, and as he was accustomed to define and formulate the impressions that came crowding into his mind, all his passionate efforts were aimed at introducing a principle of order into the encompassing chaos. He was, indeed, influenced by the policies of the past, but at the same time his intellectual alertness would not allow him to ignore the infinite complexity of the elements before him, with the result that he groped for a way that should represent a compromise between the harmony of a closed age and the disruption of the present. These tentative attempts by a man so rooted in the past, to shape the future, are one of the great processes observable in the course of his life; it is part of the development that led him from the conception of a popular Imperialism to the Republican

idea of the State, from faith in national force to a faith in the common destiny of Europe. This development was never completed. The peace that he achieved in his brief breathing spaces of success was too abruptly broken to bring him more than a few hints and suggestions that needed a long while to mature. But the way lay clear before him, and it led him into the heart of the morrow. It was, indeed, indicated to him as much by his own feelings as by the constitutional needs of the country.

His whole nature, all the direct and loyal optimism of the man, drove him into the company of young people and attracted him to all those strenuous seekers whom he suspected were, like himself, striving to interpret this perplexing age. Scepticism, weariness, and despair had a paralysing and falsifying effect on him, indeed they infected him like an illness: he was essentially so young that from some feeling of bashfulness he became unwittingly cynical in the company of cynical men, and for a time talked the, to him, strange language of scepticism. Such hours of spiritual mimicry left an evil after-taste. He was most himself in a company of young men, his laughter was gayest when he sat over a glass of beer in a crowd of students, sang the old songs with them, talked about himself and his work, and often gave them more insight into world-politics than he ever did to many a politician who pestered him with questions. Years fell from him on such occasions, he was re-absorbed in the modest beginnings of his career.

But it was not merely this feeling of ease among young people, this affection for the earliest stages of his own development, that attracted him to youth.

Since he himself had found the way to the State, since he himself had bidden his fellow-countrymen to turn away from themselves and towards the State, his efforts to strengthen it was the guiding principle of his activity, the main solicitude that lay behind all that he did.

Among the many trials of political life in Germany, what disappointed him most grievously was the hostility with which the younger citizens regarded the new State.

After the German revolution, a very unusual phenomenon was to be observed; the very class that in all revolutions carries onward the torch of revolt—the young men, and more especially the young men of the Universities, from the very first ranged themselves against the upheaval of 1918. The German Revolution, born of war-weariness and helped to victory by the exhaustion and the moral collapse of the guardians of the old regime, thus had its origin in too negative a feeling to possess any compelling force on the hearts of youth. Mutinous sailors gave it the first impulse, forces that burst forth from the darkness sped it on its way with scarce an effort, soon to disappear almost completely and bequeath their handiwork to mature and thoughtful men. It is very noteworthy that of the figures that stood forth at the outset as champions of the Revolution, Barth, Müller, and many others, scarcely one survived to take part in the establishment of the new State. Leaders put in power by nameless forces, leaders who themselves were led, stamped their likeness on the new Republic. Youth stood aside. The young men who had fought in the war, whose school-days had been cut short to

get them to the front, came back from that terrible ordeal with souls enlightened or enfeebled, and found it much more difficult to find the way back to their previous existence than did the older men whose middle years had been severed by the war.

These hopeless seekers after a departed yesterday could not come to terms with the new era which they regarded as responsible for their own distress and the misery of their country. The later-born generation of younger brothers, who had not to purge their minds of the madness of the war, who did not need their strength to help them to forget, to whom yesterday seemed like a shining legend, were the more easily drawn by their elders' example into opposition to the new State, and the readier to disavow it.

Gustav Stresemann set himself to win over the young men from the Universities. He spoke their speech, that drew its inspiration from the past; he was familiar with all their arguments and objections from having used them himself. He took pains to get into touch with every movement in which the younger men took part. He was for some time in relations with Seldte, the leader of the Stahlhelm, and so far won their confidence that he was regarded as a possible dictator, though subsequently ousted from this position by Hugenberg: and he finally contemplated the possibility of enlisting the Order of Young Germans for the service of the State.

He never lost sight of the young men. When Luther founded his League of Renewal, he shrugged his shoulders with a laugh and said: "How is any 'renewal' possible with the old people and the old parties? We can only expect new vigour from youth.

So long as we can't win over the young men, the German Republic has no foundations in the future."

The tremendous compelling force of his eloquence, his efforts to explain in terms of reason the moderation of the policy dictated by political necessities, did not fail of their effect on the younger men. He knew that the idea of the German Republic, which owed such vitality as it had solely to its opposition to the former constitution, must be filled with a content that would compel the loyalty of the individual. The phrases with which the extreme Right attracted and held the younger men had a glow that kindled the imagination, stirred up feelings that have always been made effective since the origins of history, and appealed to the energy that is the embodiment of youth; while the new era, groaning as it was under all the burdens left behind by the war, presented a grey and depressing spectacle.

The fight that Stresemann carried on against the allurements of the Right, the means that he used to bring the younger men over to his side, have been described for us by one of these same young men whom he found in the ranks of the Radicals of the Right and converted from Hitler to himself—Theodor Eschenburg:

"At the outset of our political thought, as youths fresh from school, we saw in the German Republic a State dominated by disorder, corruption, and effeminacy; we did not hate it, we despised it. Our ideal—and it was not solely due to the influence of our education and our home life—was the Empire of 1914 as we conceived it, enveloped in a glory that was almost legendary. In point of fact we could not understand how anyone belonging to the moderate Right could

devote himself wholly to the service of the State. We exulted over Hitler in 1923. We hoped everything from the Generals; Stresemann meant nothing to us. Since he had, as Chancellor, abandoned the passive resistance that had so appealed to our youthful love of heroic attitudes, we looked on him as merely one of many from whom, without a knowledge of the circumstances and personalities concerned, we could expect no salvation for the Empire."

But when he first heard Stresemann speak, the impression made on him—stronger, he relates, than any he had received from any personality—was such that it led him to revise the attitude that he shared with the other young men of his circle; "We began to feel ill at ease in this eternal negation, this persistent opposition. We gradually began to realise that what had been so constantly hammered into us was the negation of the existing order; but where was the positive programme? It might be that Stresemann's political convictions were not such as we could share, that he belonged to a party that was not ours; the important thing for us young men was to find a personality somewhere whom we could look upon as a leader."

Stresemann was not content with implanting this notion in the minds of his young men, and winning them over by his mere example. In the very days when politics made the strongest claims on him, in the thick of Cabinet crises and party feuds, at the actual decisive moments of foreign politics, he found time for the young men, received deputations of their representatives, and readily answered any questions they cared to put to him. "What sort of Minister

was this who, at moments when he was overwhelmed with labour and anxiety, was always courteous to young men like ourselves and told us what we wanted to know?"

It was to an assemblage of students, in the summer of 1925, that Stresemann addressed the great defence of his policy, the completest and most detailed defence that he ever made; in it he justified all that he had done during his period of office, a justification based as much on the example of the past as on the demands of the future.

The Foreign Minister, Gustav Stresemann, who could address the world from any tribune, and was often called upon to find the decisive word for a decisive occasion, had never made such careful preparations for any of his speeches as for this great address to the German Students' Union, and never on any other platform had he given so lucid and closely reasoned an exposition of his conception of the State. The profoundest convictions on what for him were the turning-points of history, the most considered indications of the future, to which he ever gave utterance, are contained in this speech in which every intonation, every word almost, reveals the importance he attached to this exposition of his creed. Partly because it was a habit of his and partly because he was speaking to an audience that looked back rather than forward, he began with a review of the past, and inveighed against that "chocolate-box of legends" that is put before the younger generation in preference to the facts. He defended the despised idealism of the "Democrats of Forty-eight," "who hammered the idea of unity into the hearts and brains of Germans,

when the Princes were still opposed to it." He referred to the opposition with which Bismarck found himself confronted in his struggle for German unity, and he dispelled a little of the splendour which German youth had woven round the figure of the old Emperor, who wanted to resign the throne of Prussia so as to avoid becoming German Emperor, and even in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles, said: "Emperor of Germany? I refuse to hear of such a thing!" He disengaged from the events of that time the true greatness of Bismarck's achievement, so agreeably disguised in the history-books, and made its teaching plain; "It is the emergence of a great idea at a great time—the emphasis of personality as the dominating element and the subordination of all else to that." He did not shrink from speaking of the spiritual deterioration that set in during the period of Germany's most rapid advancement, and quoted Vischer's words in reference to that time: "Germany cannot stand good fortune"; and he enlarged on the supremacy of material interests, on the estrangement between the various ranks of society, the cleavage between the educated classes and the workers, the lazy reliance on the State which accounted for the utterly unpolitical attitude of the younger generation. He explained the behaviour of the intellectuals at the time of the change by the *blasé* indifference of the age, and added bitterly: "It must be the first occasion in history that a constitution has been overthrown without the leadership or the co-operation of the chief intellectual elements in the State. Therein, indeed, lies the weakness of the 'Revolution,' if it is in fact legitimate to use the word. But therein, especially, lay the weakness of the old

system. . . . In close connection with the considerations I have been putting before you, I see the tragic consequences of the unpolitical Germany of the past. Accustomed only to authority, excluded from responsibility in really important matters, she obeyed the last authoritative command that reached her ears . . . there could be no more severe indictment of the unpolitical attitude of the German people in the past, than the helplessness and bewilderment of the intellectual classes at this time of crisis."

Stresemann had advanced a long way since his first speech after the Revolution in which he said ; "We for our part, cannot yet define our attitude to these events."

But the change that had come about within him was so fundamental, that, notwithstanding his strong attachment to the past, which he knew to be a justification for so much, he was able to turn his sharpest reproaches against this one weakness—the non-participation of the intellectual leaders in the great upheaval, and the absence of their help in the reconstruction of the State.

From his survey of German history he drew parallels that serve to emphasise existing conditions. He recalled a time when the fortunes of Germany had fallen equally low—the time of the Peace of Tilsit and of Stein's *Realpolitik* ; "which prevented a recrudescence of national feeling at a time when he thought it would be fatal to his diplomacy." . . . "When you read that Stein—fortunate statesman—placed the Press under a strict censorship as regards all articles on foreign politics and forbade it to write a word against France, you must realise that this was a deli-

berate piece of policy on the part of Prussia; the authorities said to themselves—'As we have lost a war and are fighting for our existence, none of us has the right to say what he thinks; silence at such a time is more of a patriotic duty than fine sentiments.'" And it was not merely by the example of the past that Stresemann justified his work. Excited as he was by his youthful audience, he found the truest words for the faith that was in him. "Even in the times in which we live there must be a faith that removes mountains, and does not measure events by the duration of a human life. It matters nothing whether the individual lives to see whatever may be in store for Germany. For the assessment of actual development the fate of the individual is of as little importance as a drop in the ocean. No, the decisive question is whether, measured by the standards of history, the German people is again to reach the heights." And the path to those heights lay clear before him; "International co-operation for national reconstruction." "If you try to find a general formula for Germany's foreign politics to-day, you will see the network of international relations in which we are and must be involved." He was, however, very well aware of the line of demarcation between his own age and the past. "The conditions with which German foreign policy has to deal to-day are quite other than those that must have confronted the statesmen of the time of the wars of Liberation. A war of Germany against other powers is a Utopia. But apart from the practical impossibility of such a proceeding, under present conditions in Europe we could not look for any stabilisation of our position even as the result of a

successful war. The task before us is to devote all our strength to the maintenance of peace in Europe, so that, within such an area of peace, it may be possible for Germany's war-wounds to be healed. . . . Our way is therefore clear before us; we must strengthen our own national life by the advancement of peaceful understanding."

These words are the centre-point of Gustav Stresemann's confession of faith. The policy to which he was to give his name was not a policy of impotence conceived under external compulsion, which he would have modified or set aside had circumstances been more favourable; he put it forward as the only policy, the essential policy, imposed equally upon all peoples by the needs of the world-situation, and indispensable to Germany's interests. "The way to a new Germany," he called the speech he made in Oslo, in which he expounded the same point of view more cursorily and perhaps with less lucidity.

There was for him one way only; not "for the time being" or "under the given circumstances," but absolute and indefeasable; the way that led to European co-operation and the recovery of Germany through the maintenance of peace. To this policy he gave an ideological foundation. He began with a contrast between the conceptions of nationalism and world-alliance. He went a step further, and reached an even higher level. "The comparison of national and international co-operation as being in direct opposition seems to me foolish," he said in Oslo. As he weighed the two conceptions, his thoughts constantly turned back to Goethe, and he sought for traits that might reveal the ideal type of world-humanity, the final

reconciliation between national consciousness and participation in the world-community.

He tried to find more precise and more compelling expressions for this reconciliation, this "need of neighbourly relations," as Goethe called it, as the idea became clearer and crystallised in his mind. He wrote a great deal at that time, which was one of the most intellectually fruitful in his life—that is to say, he did not write, he dictated, at a tremendous speed that corresponded to the feverish activity of his mind. He was fond of referring to Napoleon's observation: "I cannot write well because my thoughts and the movements of my hands get in each other's way like two contrary currents. My thoughts are the fastest, and then it is good-bye to the letters. I can only dictate, and I like doing that, I feel as if I were talking to myself." Stresemann dictated everything, articles, letters, notes, drafts for speeches, and, whether he was at home, at his office, or travelling, someone had always to be within reach who could take down shorthand, for he had grown used to dictating the most trifling scraps of memoranda. He seldom wrote; when he did it was in a large flowing script in which not merely the letters but the words were allowed to run into each other; it had the decorative air of a handwriting that is reserved for great occasions; it was never, as is usual with those who depend on writing with their own hands, scattered and broken by the stress of hurrying thoughts. As the result of the habit of dictation his style acquired something of the effortless flow of oratory, a rounded, rather soulless smoothness. Words had, for him, no individual life of their own, none of that special value that comes of savouring them

as they are written down; for him they were merely a link in a chain, absorbed in the general intonation of a sentence.

According to the psychological classification, Stresemann was an "auditive" not a "visual" type of man. A sentence, a line of poetry, an impression, did not, for him, really exist until he had uttered them. Hence his delight in speech, definition, self-expression, and in the company of his fellowmen, all of which meant for him an increased intensity of life.

At the time that brought him a certain continuity in his manner of life, and for a while set him free from the agitation of conflict, the social side of his nature was more especially observable. For a while he lived his life as he preferred to live it. He ceased to feel the bond-slave of his calling; he found time for motor tours in the country round Berlin, for walks in the solitary pine-scented woodlands; for cutting roses in his garden on a Sunday morning in summer, and for falling asleep over a novel. He often went to the theatre in the evening, hummed the tunes of an operetta, or made the success of a farce by his great laughter; and sat with his friends late into the night, twisting his wine glass in his fingers to catch the glitter of the liquid gold within.

He did not realise that there were now no barriers between his profession and his private life, that he who had been able to shake off anxiety and vexation and forget them, at any rate in his private life, now in the joy of success and recognition was opening wide his doors to the outside world until it forced its way into the ultimate guarded stillness of his home.

His life went forward in such a congestion of work

that many men of lesser nervous energy would have collapsed under the strain. But Stresemann was so glad to give himself, the man's whole personality was so radiant with joy, that any thought of weariness or exhaustion seemed ridiculous.

He began his activities somewhat late in the day; he was no early riser, and he used to say with a laugh that he mistrusted men who got out of bed very early—they were usually uncomfortably and dangerously astute. He loved a long sleep in the morning, the leisurely prelude to the day, the contemplative quiet before work began. He strolled slowly through the garden to his office, with the fat and gasping Mops at his heels, who at that time was his inseparable companion. In the waiting-room of the Foreign Office, callers were already pacing up and down, wearing out the now threadbare carpet. The great Lenbach portrait of Bismarck in a slouch hat gazed after them with wise eyes, as though he were watching a parade of unfamiliar figures.

So much had happened in that waiting-room. Once, the Revolution had burst in with a deputation of Workmen's and Soldiers' Councils, but only a little inlaid table, in which a cigar had burnt a hole beside a small carved rose, had any tale to tell of that brief reign of terror. Democracy now keeps that door. Immaculate Ambassadors, American journalists with their hands in their pockets, captains of industry looking at the clock-hand with ill-suppressed fury, party officials from distant provinces, tightly buttoned into frock-coats of former days, leading parliamentarians of all parties, "distinguished foreigners" passing through Berlin, persistent suitors who have been put off for

weeks—they all wait and come and go; but business is invariably held up, and Bernhard wrings his hands in despair. In vain he carefully compiles a programme for the day, in vain he makes the visitors, and especially the journalists, swear that they will not stay more than twenty minutes with the Minister; after half an hour he rushes in with a request for an urgent signature, stares angrily round, and observes the Minister leaning peacefully back in his chair, smoking one of the cigars which in token of his popularity now bear his name and portrait on their box, letting his visitor talk, interjecting a question from time to time—there is so much that is important and interesting; twice the allotted time has passed, the Minister pretends not to notice Bernhard's urgency, until at last he flings a malicious glance at the door which his secretary has indignantly shut behind him and says at last: "Well, we must stop now, or my Cerberus-angel will be really angry."

At the villa, guests were often waiting for luncheon or dinner—or the car had been standing for a long while at the door, before the Minister disposed of his last caller. Usually, one of them drove back with him, at any rate part of the way, so that they might finish their conversation. Everywhere someone was waiting; on the landing messengers with papers, in the study his lady secretary, in the library some visitor who had had time to read a book half-through, and two strange men were whispering in the drawing-room; but all this scurry, the buzzing telephone bells and the constantly slamming doors, all the shattered quiet of his home, was under the spell of his broad laughter, of the vast composure—born, it would seem, of an infinitude of leisure—with which he dealt with people, disposed of

papers, and conducted interminable conversations on the telephone.

Herbert Bismarck's writing table, that still bears traces of the famous inkpot-throw, groans under a confusion of private letters, neat bundles of State papers, red-covered files, newspaper cuttings, secret memoranda and the latest books—not to mention carefully-sharpened pencils and boxes of sweets—but his hands find their way surely through this disastrous pile, which like the confusion of his life, seems to him in perfect order.

Little Jochen called his father " The State " when he took over the Government, and though Stresemann forbade the disrespectful designation, he still used to ask, when he got home, whether " The State " was there, and did not realise how apt the absurd nickname was. Gustav Stresemann had, in fact, no longer any private existence. When he wandered through the Brandenburg countryside with Bernhard, he was even then discussing political questions ; when at the theatre he would go out in the intervals to telephone to newspaper offices. He himself hardly recognised the dividing line between his own individual destinies and the public life of Germany.

When he had the unexpected opportunity of spending a quiet evening with his family, he was as delighted as a schoolboy. He called it rest and refreshment, and was overjoyed to eat scrambled eggs and roast veal after his elaborate dinners with ambassadors and financial magnates. When dinner had been waiting on the table for some time his wife came in to fetch him ; she found him at the telephone. As soon as he heard her light footstep, with an instinctive gesture he

reached his hand over his shoulder, took her fingers in his and was soon deep in his conversation once more.

The "quiet evening" was dismembered by telephone calls, and developed into a long political discussion with Wolfgang; or if an old friend came in later, the conversation ranged over the events of the day, the outlook in foreign politics, industrial conditions, recent happenings in the party, the increasing prevalence of jazz music, the leading article in the *Voss*, the possibilities of reform in the constitution of the Empire, and everything else in which Stresemann took an eager interest, until far into the night.

The pause in home politics did not last for long. Stresemann was startled out of his busy leisure by the Christmas Government crisis which now seemed to be becoming a regular parliamentary occurrence.

The diplomatic successes at Geneva and Thoiry, the hopes that were stimulated by Stresemann's optimism, had re-awakened the Nationalists' aspirations to office. On this occasion, in his conduct of the negotiations, Stresemann was guided by his aims in domestic policy rather than by any consideration of foreign politics. His scheme was to break off the left wing of the Hugenberg majority and separate the more moderate from the irresponsible elements. In this way he hoped, by inducing the more amenable to co-operate with him, to make use of the then existing favourable opportunity for a re-grouping of parties.

"Government is the best training for an Opposition. Even the loudest of them will find out that water is the only thing to cook with, and that there is only one way to foreign policy and not two. The really desperate ones will then join up with the Radicals of

the Right, and devour them or be devoured by them. The great block of the Right Opposition will thus be shattered. A reasonable Conservative Party will emerge—and that is what we want in Germany." Such were his arguments.

However, the negotiations over the formation of a Cabinet did not proceed quite as he had anticipated. The Nationalists tried to introduce their most extreme partizans, not their more moderate members, into the Government. By a threat of resignation Stresemann succeeded in preventing the nomination of Graef, who had once refused to take the oath to the Republic. The crisis dragged on beyond the middle of January. From day to day Stresemann had to postpone his projected journey. He suddenly became aware how urgently he needed a rest; the life that he led was too much for the strongest heart. At last the Cabinet was completed and he departed to San Remo.

A chill Spring was in the air, a hard white light glittered over the sea, there were very few people in the place, and Stresemann was enveloped in silence. His little sitting-room in the hotel was heavy with the fragrance of roses sent from all parts of the Riviera by enthusiastic admirers, known and anonymous. All the sideboards and all the fragile chairs were loaded with piles of books, and on the large table in the middle of the room was spread the map on which Stresemann was reconstructing the dispositions of the Battle of Leipzig. He was writing a long essay intended as a vindication of Blücher and directed against the representation of his character in Wolfgang Goetz's drama, "Neidhart von Gneisenau." The primitive vigour of Blücher's character appealed to Stresemann's imagina-

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tion; he was further influenced by the fact that Blücher, like himself, was a convinced Freemason, and he now devoted his whole leisure to prove from the evidence of the authorities that Goetz had done bitter injustice to Marshal Vorwärts.

In addition to this comprehensive task, he dealt, from a distance, with a large part of his official work in Berlin: important papers were sent on to him, and envoys from various foreign capitals arrived for lengthy conferences. He was surrounded by a whole staff of secretaries, stenographers, and assiduous attachés, dictated for hours at a time, carefully read the newspapers, telephoned, held conferences, drafted documents—and when, in the evening, he strolled with Bernhard along the steep rocky shore, he would suddenly stop, breathe a great draught of sea air with its mingled salt and flower-laden savour, and say with a sigh of relief: "There is something glorious about a holiday like this; do you know, Bernhard, I wasn't really intended for work, I'm fundamentally lazy and my greatest pleasure is doing nothing."

Gustav Stresemann had the impression of rest, just as in an aeroplane flying at high speed one often has the impression of immobility, and yet there were only a few moments in his life that brought him real relief from his constant tension of mind.

Once, there drifted towards him a delicate thread of adventure, faint and insubstantial as a breath, and scarcely to be set down in words. It was hardly an event at all, and yet, because one day—about a year later—his inner life was unoccupied, it grew into something like an adventure. The sister of his former secretary, who had worked for many years with the

"Doctor," happened to write a letter to Bernhard, asking him to induce the Minister to join a certain committee. Bernhard, as it chanced, was away, the letter fell into Stresemann's hands; something in its tone caught him, some phrase of whimsical enthusiasm made him smile. Perhaps he had an idle moment before him, perhaps it was a particularly bright day, perhaps the letter awakened a cherished recollection . . . anyhow—Stresemann kept the letter and answered it himself. But the reply that the writer received bore Henry Bernhard's signature, and was so vivid and high-spirited that it could only have come from a very young man.

For a while the thin thread was spun. Stresemann himself plunged with glee into all the unwonted reactions aroused in him by the correspondence. His life was described in his letters from the perspective of his trusted colleague, in all its exuberant disregard of time and order, its inordinate claims on the energies of himself and others—as, in short, he imagined it must appear in the eyes of those about him. With it all went a certain emotion, a yearning for anonymous youth, for dalliance with sensations that were unburdened and unshadowed. The Foreign Minister had to use a great deal of guile to purloin from his secretary's post the replies addressed to "dearest Bernhard," but he did it with the delight of a schoolboy in a successful prank. One day—the exchange of letters having already gone on for some time—the double deception could no longer be maintained. Moreover, Bernhard had become engaged to be married, and Stresemann could no longer carry on the correspondence without the knowledge of the pretended writer. Half-laughing and half-

embarrassed, he confessed. But Bernhard had the same sense of humour as his lord and master and viewed this idyll of the post with almost fatherly affection. Gradually, however, as the shadows of failure and the shadows of disease fell upon Stresemann's life, a gloomy seriousness crept into the light-hearted tone of the letters. His airy fancies were rudely shaken by the world events that now began to march across his pages. Suddenly the recipient realised who her correspondent was. The incognito collapsed; and when the jest was over the interchange of letters ceased also.

It was, however, this time of masquerade that suggested to him the notion of writing his memoirs in the person of his own secretary, and describing events from the point of view of an outside observer, so as to be able to stand aside from the subject of his narrative. He secretly entertained himself with this idea, which gave him a positively boyish delight, and awaited the time when he should have the leisure to carry it out. But the boy within the man, who survived so vivaciously in Stresemann, was to be granted only a few more brief hours of sunlight.

The great tragedy of disillusion was already waiting at the door.

XIII

THE PENDULUM SWINGS BACK

SHORTLY after the meeting at Thoiry it seemed as though Stresemann had become the most popular man in France. A little *diseuse* appeared on the stage and sang a song in which Stresemann was mentioned, as he was in all the popular songs of the time. She was sharply interrupted by the compère who pointed out that it was disrespectful to speak of the gentleman as merely " Stresemann ; " she should call him Monsieur Stresemann. Upon which she retorted, in admirable mimicry of the insolent Paris street-arab : " I don't say Monsieur Stresemann any more than I should say Monsieur Napoleon."

In a little Paris cabaret called the " Œil de Paris " a sketch called " The Conversation at Thoiry " filled the house evening after evening. At the back of the stage was a back scene on which were depicted the silhouettes of the two Ministers—Stresemann's oddly pointed profile, and Briand's head, with its prominent nose and pendulous moustache, emerging from his round back and hunched shoulders, each with his inevitable attribute of cigar or cigarette. The scene opened with a dialogue between the two Ministers' servants, Franz and François, who discovered that they had been stationed opposite each other on the Chemin des Dames. Suddenly their talk was interrupted by a loud roll of thunder. François ducked, but Franz waved an

encouraging hand: "Ce n'est rien, c'est mon maître qui rit." After a while a crashing chord from the 'cellos swept across the stage; it was Franz's turn to look about him in bewilderment. "Ce n'est rien," said François; "c'est mon maître qui parle." The conversation ended in their both agreeing that if both statesmen had sat opposite each other years before, all the horrors of the war and all its useless slaughter might perhaps have been avoided. The house burst into a storm of applause. Stresemann had found his way into the Paris music-hall: he had conquered France. He was as delighted as a boy when he heard of it from friends returning from Paris.

In such a favourable atmosphere the great decisions must surely come to fulfilment. Briand must soon prevail. The advantages for France were more than obvious; not merely the stabilisation of the franc, the end of the unrest that was gradually corroding the French people, but a common industrial policy, the salvation of Europe from American capitalism.

Germany would soon be free, and then he would have the whole country compact at his back. The vast balance sheet of the war would be closed. A new page of history would begin. Europe would equip herself for peace as she had once equipped herself for war. No more swollen military establishments, no more gigantic armies—all the resources of the State to be available for social purposes, for schools and universities. The great fight for youth would begin at school, a fight against the poisons of the past, against a training in national hatred and contempt. New ideals would arise, another and a better love of the past, deep-rooted in the nobler qualities of the Fatherland, in a yearning for

the common possessions of humanity. Spiritual disarmament! He thought out all the implications of the well-worn phrase. And he dreamed day-dreams in the weeks that lay before him. He dreamed of the future of Germany, of the future of Europe. A thousand schemes unfolded within him, ideas raced through his brain and were shattered by the still outstanding liquidation of the war, the completion of which was a condition of the future. The scheme worked out by the finance committee had lain a long while in his writing-table and the French expert had not yet arrived. Perhaps there had been difficulties? he would not let his mind dwell upon the possibility. The dream within him must not be darkened by any shadow.

But why was Briand silent? This insistent question shook his confidence and made him uneasy; he awaited with eagerness the December meeting of the League of Nations. A certain Sunday afternoon brought him the longed-for conversation. The tone of it was as warm and candid as ever, and, in its personal references, as unconstrained. But the vast confidence, the glowing faith that had been ready to storm the heavens, seemed overwhelmed and quenched by the ashes of doubt and discretion. There must be no undue haste, the hour was not ripe; if he aroused a powerful opposition, he would merely endanger the work and weaken his own influence. Delay, and more delay; Stresemann found it hard to resign himself; but Briand's reasons were obvious, and as he spoke so emphatically and in a tone of such distress at the ineluctable necessity, Stresemann managed to possess himself in patience. He, too, had had to face delay and stagnation brought about by hindrances at home. The

achievement was so great that it was worth weeks of waiting. Moreover he carried back with him from Geneva one result at least, the dissolution of Allied military control. With it went a survival of the war, as a foretaste of the great process of clearance that was now to begin.

At the end of December he proposed to go to Paris in person. He had so arranged with Briand at Thoiry, and now, in the greatest secrecy, made the preparations for his journey. For years past he had been filled with a yearning to see foreign lands and unknown cities that were for him a mere image of historical recollection.

" Every little clerk," he would often complain to his friends, " who saves up his money, has only to buy a ticket at the railway station and go off to Paris or Rome. I am the only German who may not see the world. I have hardly seen anything. I have to picture in my imagination what every passer-by has seen with his own eyes." When he talked to Briand at Thoiry about the desirability of his coming to Paris to discuss the final details of the great act of settlement, he added : " I would really rather come incognito ; " and as he spoke, he smiled at the thoughts that came into his mind : " a Foreign Minister has so little freedom." The Frenchman, who had a gay and varied life behind him, misunderstood the words no less than the smile. " On arrangera cela," he replied, with a twinkle in his eye ; " on arrangera cela." But he was confronted with a blank and uncomprehending stare. Stresemann had been merely thinking of a peaceful stroll through the city ; he wanted to visit the tomb of his beloved hero under the Dome of the Invalides, look for old books on the stalls along the quays, and breathe the air of

Paris undisturbed by the curiosity of men. It was not until the Thoiry conversation was at an end that Professor Hesnard explained the misunderstanding to Briand and how unnecessary his discretion had been; whereupon Briand shook his head in bewilderment.

At the end of December came the judgment of the Court at Landau[1] and frustrated the projected journey. "I will wait a few weeks until the excitement here has died down," observed Stresemann. But after a few weeks, it was intimated to Stresemann that he would be well advised to postpone his visit until a more favourable moment; it would for the time being be inopportune, and there were certain questions that could not then be discussed.

In France, during the months that had passed since Thoiry, a backward swing of the pendulum had begun. Events had moved too quickly in the years 1925-26, and a people still labouring under their recollections of the war could not accommodate themselves to so speedy a *rapprochement*. In spite of Locarno, in spite of the safeguards of the alliances and the treaties of arbitration, French popular sentiment did not regard the question of security as settled. Even the champions of the Franco-German understanding pointed out that France must provide for the protection of her Eastern frontier, before evacuation could be considered, and the reconstruction of the Eastern fortresses which had been decided on immediately after the war had been

[1] Lieut. Rouzier, an officer in the French Army of Occupation, had been charged with shooting a German civilian, and wounding two others, in Sept., 1926. He was acquitted by a French court-martial at Landau; and six Germans accused of being implicated were sentenced to imprisonment. The sentences were remitted, on Christmas Day, by the French President.

neglected partly owing to lack of material and partly in reliance upon the sure and certain rampart of the occupied territory. The effect of the French nation's burning need of peace and their profound war-weariness were greatly mitigated by the doubts of the value of the security guaranteed by treaties, and by their anxious quest for the actual foundations of security, and for the psychological presumptions of an enduring peace. Of Stresemann's honesty or of his will for peace no one was in any doubt. But the politician and the man in the street both asked themselves the same question: Is Stresemann Germany?—is Germany Stresemann?

At the very moment when the policy of understanding began to make real progress in Germany, when so sound and far-sighted a judge of German affairs as Count d'Ormesson was able to state that the irreconcilables, the Germany of Potsdam, as he called it, constituted a minority, a wave of suspicion swept over France. "Nations, it seems, as Rahel said of human beings, fall in love at different times," observed Stresemann; "and it will perhaps be their tragedy also." This change of feeling was speedily followed by the end of the franc crisis. Poincaré backed the franc, and it rose, slowly and obstinately, point by point. The great speculators for a fall, who had prophesied that the franc would go the way of the mark and the krone, lay shattered on the ground. The franc did not fall again —Poincaré saw to that; and the miraculous stabilisation of the mark was followed by the miraculous stabilisation of the franc. The atmosphere of panic that had overhung the country since the fall in the franc vanished forthwith. And as the weeks passed

the French people grew prouder of the fact that they had saved themselves by the virtue that was in them. The proposed German offer for the earlier evacuation of the occupied territory, which had been intended for the stabilisation of the franc, lost its value.

Poincaré became the saviour of the French people. Every small *rentier*, every thrifty soul who thought himself secured from ruin by his savings, worshipped Poincaré as the guardian angel of his country. His authority increased from day to day. In this atmosphere of admiration and popular affection, that obdurate personage lost a little of his hardness. The song of hate against Germany vanished from his speeches. But although—or perhaps because—there were no outward manifestations of hostility, his influence had a paralysing effect on the policy of *rapprochement* and gave no handle to the opposition. And Briand was silent. He who had survived so much, who had watched the unrolling of so many skeins of development, who had so often reckoned with time as a factor in human affairs, now left it to time to impress the principle of a higher necessity upon a disordered world. Stresemann could not understand this waiting attitude, this passive calm, born of the experience of a long life.

He began to doubt Briand—there were moments when he felt he had been deceived, and he burst into a fury. Doubt and anger were followed by days on which he found excuses for Briand and discovered explanations for his behaviour. Then he grew quieter until the long suspense ended in a further outbreak.

The impatience that tormented him had something

of the disillusion of a lover. When Loucheur came to Berlin in the spring of 1927, and Stresemann held a great reception in his honour, he asked him many questions about Briand. At a private luncheon party at the villa, Loucheur dominated the conversation with anecdotes of Briand; Stresemann hung on his lips, and there was a note of something like tenderness in his ringing laughter. He often talked to Marcel Ray, who had accompanied Loucheur, about the doubts that tortured him, his shaken confidence, and the bitterness of his disappointment. "He quivered inwardly with feverish passion that he could scarcely control, and which constantly made him unjust. And there were people who looked on him as cynical, whereas he suffered, in fact, from an excess of sensibility," wrote Ray, in his obituary notice. "Briand's long and cautious silence after the conversation at Thoiry, which had only taken place a few months before, upset him to such an extent that he spoke of it with eyes that were almost wet as though he were struggling to overcome his tears. 'I can't have been wrong,' he cried; 'I staked everything on that one card.'"

In the face of all his doubts, in his days of faith and of bitter disillusion he remained loyal to Briand; even when he gave way to anger, he was always careful never to let fall the lightest word of reproach against him. At the bottom of his soul he kept his faith in the man, though he often complained of him bitterly. . . . "I can't have been wrong. . . ." He endured the ridicule of his enemies, the laughter of the malicious, the jeers of the spiteful, and the reproach of credulity. He never uttered a word to divert the attacks to Briand, never tried to put the blame on to the French-

man. He protected him, moreover, against attacks in France by not disclosing the subject of the conversations at Thoiry. And he waited. It seemed to him as though events were developing with a sort of slow-motion process. He followed with great interest the industrial conference at Geneva, but at the bottom of his heart he was immensely sceptical. "After all, what can come of a meeting of representatives of opposing interests? One of the maladies of our time is the exaggeration of the importance of industrial experts. These gentlemen who conduct their own concerns so impeccably, often fail when they have been asked to deal with larger policies. Europe's future depends on industrial reconstruction, but the reconstructing will have to be carried out by politicians and not by leaders of industry."

He who had always spoken of the primacy of politics held fast to his creed. He thought of his own solution and of how easily European economics could have been set on a firm basis, if the last remaining political difficulties between France and Germany could first have been composed. He never abandoned his insistent hope of a meeting with Briand. But the July assembly of the League brought him a fresh disappointment. Briand arrived tired and broken down. The burden of the last few months had told on him too. The exhausted organism was ripe for an illness. He developed a temperature; an eruption broke out on his forehead which was at first thought to be a harmless nettle-rash. He would not be put off from his work, and soon after his arrival arranged an interview with Stresemann. But the unlucky star that seemed to hang over Thoiry made its influence felt even at that moment.

On the eve of their meeting Briand's temperature rose alarmingly; the doctor who was summoned next day diagnosed a severe attack of shingles. In vain Stresemann pleaded for even the briefest of conversations; the doctor refused to allow his patient to make the tax upon his strength and ordered an immediate return to Paris.

In Geneva there were rumours of a diplomatic illness that came so opportunely to relieve its subject from an awkward meeting; but Stresemann himself angrily rejected any such suspicion. He paced excitedly up and down his little sitting-room as he waited for the telephone message. When the news came that Briand could not see him, all the blood seemed to have been drained out of his face. He had the broken look of a gambler who has lost on the card on which he has staked his all. But the faith that possessed Gustav Stresemann was stronger than any conspiracy of untoward circumstances.

September found him once more in Geneva; he had spent a holiday at Wildungen and was full of his old energy, and inextinguishable optimism. He resigned himself to waiting, but like one who lies ready to spring. The French elections were to take place in the spring and Briand would once more have a free hand.

Stresemann was then unquestionably the most popular man in Geneva. He was the subject of almost as many anecdotes as Briand himself. Briand kept himself a little in the background; he was not so visible as usual and seemed to be labouring under a certain physical fatigue. On this account Stresemann's relations with Loucheur became very close. At a dinner in the Hotel des Bergues, Loucheur was seen in

a prolonged colloquy with Stresemann. He would now sit over a glass of beer among the French delegates with as much ease and unconstraint as he felt among his own colleagues. It was the first time that the German Foreign Minister and his wife had been invited into an exclusively French company. Only such foreigners were present as had almost ceased to be regarded as such—Titulesco, Politis and so forth; and the French Chef du Protocole tore his hair at the thought that the first invitation to the Head of the German Delegation had been issued in so unofficial a form. But to Stresemann these unaccustomed surroundings seemed quite a matter of course. From time to time his gaze strayed over the dancing-floor and rested lovingly on the slim figure of his wife, as he conducted a violent argument with Paul Boncour about the Protocol. If there was a word he did not understand, or a difficult sentence that he could not completely translate, he would turn with a laugh to Hesnard or Marcel Ray: "Traduction s'il vous plaît. . . ."

All his labours at Geneva in the year 1927 were devoted to preventing the resuscitation of the Protocol in any shape or form. He had indeed laughingly said to Briand during the preliminary negotiations at Locarno: "I am ready to swear to the gospel of the League of Nations, but my faith does not extend to the apocryphal writings, as for example, the Protocol."

In that unprofitable year of 1927 he made one of the few positive contributions to the work of the League: the signature of the Optional Clause.[1] He at least, he

[1] Regarding reference of judiciable disputes to the Permanent Court at the Hague.

felt, had something to offer, surrounded as he was by a clamour of empty voices trying to still the impatience of the peoples. "Attendez!" cried Politis from the tribune, and Stresemann's lips twitched bitterly as he listened. "I cannot," he said in his turn, "be satisfied with the word that in an outburst of pessimism the Greek Representative let fall at the close of his speech; and I do not think it sufficiently amplified by Count Apponyi's exhortation to us to 'hope.'" Briand then mounted the tribune, and he was perhaps thinking of a special instance of impatience when he observed that even though exaggerated hopes had not been fulfilled it must not be thought nothing had happened. He spoke of his confidence in Stresemann, and added: "Others, however, may come after Herr Stresemann, borne upon the changing flood of German politics, who perhaps may not share his views. . . ."

The German Delegation exchanged glances of astonishment. Stresemann's position seemed more secure than ever; his policy, in spite of the disappointment over Thoiry, was backed by the majority of the German nation.

When Stresemann returned to Berlin, he was occupied for a while with the business of the Foreign Office. The appointment to the embassy at Washington proved a test of his independence. The most influential forces were set in motion to press the claims of various candidates and much rivalry ensued. While diplomats with undeniable claims, politicians with the support of powerful friends, made interest for the Washington post, Stresemann, not without satisfaction, flouted the elderly hierarchy by appointing a young councillor of embassy. It was not the first

time that he had become aware of an official through his reports, in which, as in this case, the form of presentment and the clarity of phrasing had compelled his attention. He summoned Prittwitz to Dresden, where he happened to be at the time, and their conversation confirmed his favourable impression. Thus it came about that the young, slim, thin-lipped councillor of embassy with his pleasant smile was preferred before the most highly protected of ambassadors. "We must not," he said, "become like France, ruled and represented by old men. We must give the younger men an opportunity to prove themselves while they are still at their best. Even if we meet with a few disappointments, even if we have to reckon with the errors of inexperience, we must let able men test themselves in action." He busied himself with large plans for the reorganisation of the Foreign Office. Now that his position seemed completely secure he could begin his fight against bureaucracy, against the conspiracy of the machine.

His conversion to the Republic had now become so deeply rooted that he issued an order to all ambassadors and ministers to arrange a celebration of the date of the proclamation of the Republic, and to take part in it themselves. When it subsequently came to his knowledge that one of the ambassadors was disposed to shirk what was to him an unpleasant occasion, he wrote him a letter in which he pointed out that the capital in question must have a very singular climate, if it was endurable at the beginning of August but became impossible by the 11th of that month.

But his schemes reached beyond these questions to a future that, after the realisation of the agreement

reached at Thoiry, in which his faith never wavered, was to assume a different aspect. After the settlement in the West there must be a settlement in the East. "The Polish corridor is a passage that separates a lover from his beloved," he said to a concourse of journalists when the conversation turned to the relations between Poland and Germany.

"Then do you think, Herr Minister, that Poland will one day simply resign the corridor?"

"There are statesmen even in Poland," replied Stresemann with a certain acrimony, and added gravely: "The Poles cannot permanently shut their eyes to the necessity of industrial co-operation with Germany. They must realise the advantages of a *rapprochement*. Poland's industrial position is bad, her finances are in confusion: we would undertake to back her exchange and clear up her economic situation in return for a satisfactory arrangement regarding the corridor, which would be worth great industrial sacrifices to us."

"The Poles will only abandon the corridor under the threat of force," put in a journalist, who was accustomed to express himself in the terms of a leading article. "As soon as we are no longer a powerless people . . ."

"You don't appear to have read the Locarno arbitration treaties, in which we gave up the use of force as a deciding factor in politics," broke in Stresemann.

"What is your real view of the solution of the Polish question?" asked the editor of one of the newspapers of the Left, rolling a large cigar from side to side of his mouth. "Public opinion in Poland would . . ."

"Turn out a Government that ventured on any such thing?" said Stresemann finishing the sentence for him. "That I know. Indeed I don't at all mind seeing that sort of thing in the papers sometimes; but not at inappropriate moments and not too often;" and he raised his glass with a laugh to one of the company who stood a little aloof. "Public opinion," he went on, "must in the long run yield to inevitable realities. But the way must first be prepared. We must be a little politer to the Poles?"—here he shot another glance across to the corner; "the Poles must . . ."

"But, Herr Minister," retorted the object of these last remarks; "you have often spoken in the most unfriendly way about Poland."

"Ah, that was when I did not want anything out of Poland," countered Stresemann promptly. "When you want to make a business agreement with a man you don't start by hitting him in the face. As I said at first, friendly relations with Poland are a preliminary to any settlement. . . ."

"And the commercial treaty?" pursued the first inquirer; "Why do we hear no more of that?"

"You are perfectly right. The Polish swine cost me sleepless nights. Our people will not see that Poland is our best customer. Much more secure than the fairy tale of Russian trade with which I am always being confronted. The commercial treaty is, of course, a *conditio sine quâ non*. First the commercial treaty, then a general clearance of the atmosphere, and after that the course of true love will run smooth. . . ."

"But what about the outlet to the sea that Poland wants?"

"We can let the experts puzzle their heads over that

later on; when we get as far as that, many a political constellation may have changed. But first we must get so far. . . ."

At the meeting of the League of Nations in December he discussed the Polish question with Chamberlain and Briand. Marshal Pilsudski had come to Geneva for the first time to be present at the debate on the Polish-Lithuanian dispute.

Stresemann looked forward with great curiosity to his encounter with the singular ruler of Poland who had made so quick a passage from revolutionary to dictator, from membership of the anarchist-socialist group, the so-called Bojowka, which organised raids on bullion trains to get possession of the money intended for the Tsarist Government, to the dignity of the great commander and statesman.

At a luncheon given by Briand, at which Chamberlain, Scialoja, and Zaleski were also present, he made Pilsudski's acquaintance. He saw before him a man of middle height and slim figure topped rather unexpectedly by a massive head with a vast sloping forehead like a wall with a sharply-angled coping; and beneath it a pallid face, eyes set close and deep, and a sensitive mouth covered by a pendant moustache. He stretched out a friendly hand to the German statesman, and immediately engaged him in conversation. "Do you know Major v. P.?" he asked abruptly; "he went with me to Magdeburg—you remember when."[1] Stresemann was annoyed by Pilsudski's indulgence in these reminiscences on such an occasion. "I happened

[1] Pilsudski, having been arrested by the Germans then in occupation of Warsaw, was imprisoned in Magdeburg from the summer of 1917 until November, 1918.

to meet him a few days ago," he answered in the expressionless tone of one who wants to finish the conversation. But Pilsudski pursued his recollections. "He was a good officer—very able, very able indeed. What has become of him?" "I don't exactly know," observed Stresemann, in an obvious desire to change the subject. "Well, well—it was a glorious army, the old German army," went on Pilsudski with powerfully rolling R's; "I had the greatest respect for the German army." He was leaning back in his chair with his legs crossed, and before his eyes, that seemed shadowed by so much that he had seen, passed pictures of those days. The conversation was carried on in German. Briand did not understand a word and shifted uneasily from side to side. Chamberlain's face grew longer, and only Scialoja followed, with a faintly amused smile, a conversation that had taken so unexpected a turn.

"When I was in Magdeburg in those days," went on Pilsudski meditatively—but he suddenly became aware of the embarrassment so plainly expressed on the German Foreign Minister's face, and broke off with a laugh. "Don't think I bear you a grudge, Herr Minister. I always think that the Germans could really have shot me, and that in any other country I should have been shot." A burst of laughter made the two men friends.

When Stresemann discussed the corridor question with Briand, the latter said, "You should have talked it over with Pilsudski;" and added with a touch of malice: "you got on with him so well." And when he opened the subject with Chamberlain, he received the same advice. "But I can't ask a man whose

acquaintance I have only just made to give up a piece of his country," answered Stresemann with a laugh. "Only Pilsudski can get anything done in Poland," was the reply; "and he is capable of taking a long view."

Meantime Pilsudski had left Geneva, and Stresemann himself did not think the time had come. He wanted to conclude the commercial treaty first, and open an era of friendly relations, in the course of which the real interdependence of German-Polish industrial interests would be made clear. Moreover, the situation in the West had first to reach its final settlement; and at their December meeting he had found Briand more dispirited and evasive than in September. "We must absolutely wait until the French elections are over . . . nothing can be done at this moment." Wait—always that detestable word! He was so bad at waiting, perhaps because his sense of life brought him a dark foreboding that the time he had for waiting was very short.

At the end of the year he was attacked by one of his constantly recurring inflammations of the throat that had so deadly an effect on his latent kidney disease. He himself saw no more in it than a long and rather obstinate bout of influenza, that left him unexpectedly weak. His doctors were most insistent that he should make a long stay in Egypt. "Later on," he said, "when I can think about taking a rest." He promised to take care of his health as soon as his task was achieved. His stay at Cap Martin brought about a quick recovery. "There, I need not go to Egypt after all," he said triumphantly to his doctor.

When he came back from the Riviera, he bore no

signs of his late illness. The painfully swollen glands on his neck were reduced to their normal size; and the sunshine of the blue coast had tanned him a deceitful brown. He looked stronger and healthier than ever. He at once undertook a double programme of work. In addition to his official duties he began to work feverishly for the election campaign. He was not content with the success of his policy in North Germany alone. He tried to win over Bavaria; he allowed himself to be put forward as a candidate for the People's Party in Munich, and laboured to gain support for his ideas among the working classes. It was a hard and humiliating struggle. He was greeted by whistles from his audiences, and contemptuous questions about the price of his betrayal. He was involved in disputes with Hitler's satellites, and had to exert all his force to shout down the uproar at his meetings. He would come down from the platform bathed in sweat. "It is much easier," he said bitterly; "to fight for the welfare of Germany before a tribunal of the nations than to explain the meaning of foreign politics to a Bavarian."

The Munich failure was partly mitigated by his satisfaction at feeling the party was now united at his back. The party had grasped the signs of the times, and inscribed the word "Stresemann" on its banner. On all the kiosks and all the walls were posters presenting a gigantic head of Stresemann, and the election cry of the People's Party, which combined doggerel with good sense:

"Was gehen dich die andern an,
Du wählst wie Gustav Stresemann."

XIV

THE RACE WITH DEATH

HIS fiftieth birthday. The entire German people celebrated the anniversary, as though this milestone on a career had roused them to a realisation of the significance of the man they honoured. All classes shared in the tribute. A few days before 10th May all the Goethe relics had disappeared from the shops of the Berlin antiquaries, not an autograph of his was to be found, and a search for an engraving of Napoleon would have been useless. One was met with the answer: "It's the Herr Reichsminister Stresemann's birthday, you know." "We were not prepared for such a mass attack on Napoleon and Goethe relics, and had not laid in adequate supplies," said one of the sharper dealers. "So Stresemann is fifty years old," said the man in the street; "quite a young man really, and so famous already. Well, he'll go far; he pulled the cart out of the mud, that's sure enough."

Gustav Stresemann was the most popular man in Berlin—perhaps in all Germany. The voice of criticism was dumb, and the unconverted did not dare to utter a reproach. No fiftieth birthday ever produced such eulogisms in the Press. All the champions of a policy of conciliation honoured themselves in the representative of their point of view. Such hymns of praise can hardly ever have reached the ears of a man still living. There was already a Stresemann legend.

And the chorus of unanimous admiration that rose from the columns of the German newspapers of all political colours on 10th May had never been heard in Germany before.

A phenomenon without parallel had taken place. The German people had become united in a most singular unity, to praise and not to revile, to love and not to hate. Shortly before his birthday Stresemann went to Heidelberg to receive an honorary doctorate. No statesman was ever prouder of an academic distinction. All the success of the last few months had not impaired his capacity for enjoyment. On the day before he left for Heidelberg, Stresemann was the happiest man in the world. There was a positive radiance about him such as was rare even with this glorious optimist. Only for a second a shadow fell—a superstitious fear of an envious fate. "I am rather afraid of 10th May—something unpleasant always happens on my birthday. They were almost without exception the unhappiest days of my life." However it was but a passing cloud, he was soon his exuberant self.

The Heidelberg days passed in a blaze of glory. On his return journey he was seized by a sudden weakness. "I must have poisoned myself with those mushrooms yesterday," he reflected; "I shall be all right by the 10th." He did not believe for one moment that it could be anything serious, although he felt no better in the days that followed.

There was an oppression at his forehead as though an iron band were being tightened round his head. The doctors went about with anxious faces—he ignored them and grew angry. He would not see any

doctors: "I always feel ill," he said; "when I merely catch sight of those professional pessimists."

On the evening of the 9th he still hoped to be able to get up on the following day to celebrate his birthday in the company of a few friends.

On the 10th, in the early hours of the morning, a storm burst upon the villa. The policeman stationed outside the little side-door in the Friedrich Ebert-strasse could scarcely control the incessant stream of messengers. All the flower shops in Berlin appeared to have been raided. The little island in the Linne-strasse was the centre of a congested throng of motor vans; crates were carried into the house, and parcels of every size handed in at the front door. They were mostly pictures that emerged from the swathes of packing paper, but there were also costly silver figures, bronze statuettes, and even cases of choice wines. About midday the first cars drove up with black-coated gentlemen in tall hats. Frau Stresemann received all the callers. The doctors had forbidden the Minister to get up, holding out hopes of a possible appearance in the afternoon. Meantime he had the newspapers read aloud to him. "No living man has ever seen such obituaries of himself," he said with a smile on his pale lips.

In the rooms below, all official Germany, all the representatives of foreign Powers filed past Frau Stresemann. Even the winter garden with its gaily painted walls, its cheerful basket chairs, and sweet fragrance of hothouse plants, was thronged with ceremonious black-coated figures. No shadow as yet had fallen upon the great occasion. There was nothing unfamiliar about Stresemann's sudden indispositions,

and indeed everyone expected to see his broad and genial smile at any moment.

But the deception could not be kept up much longer. The German people, still absorbed in the festival mood of the previous day, were startled by the news of sudden illness. Was it possible that he who had appeared to be the embodiment of health, the essence of vitality, could be in danger of his life—threatened by an illness that had long been secretly undermining his constitution. Had no doctor noticed how ill he was? The young family physician, Dr. Schulmann, felt that this public surprise contained an element of reproach. "You will bear me out," he said to an old friend of the family; "that after that attack at Thoiry I was constantly warning him, as I was quite aware of the seriousness of his condition; but you know what the Minister is like—as soon as he felt all right, he laughed at warnings."

The flowers of the 10th of May were still unwithered, the atmosphere of festivity still overhung the villa; but terror now stalked through those garish rooms. Gustav Stresemann was at grips with death. His life, of whose achievements everyone had been thinking with pride and joy, suddenly became so precious and irreplaceable, that the whole German people suffered in that struggle. The anxiety was as marvellously unanimous as the tributes that had gone before. The newspapers brought out extra editions with the medical bulletins, as though a ruling sovereign lay dying; working-men snatched the papers out of the hands of the street sellers, and crowds thronged the doors of editorial offices to read the bulletins. Strangers addressed each other in the street: "Do you

know how Stresemann is getting on?—has there been a bulletin in the last few hours?"

No one dared to ring up the villa, but Bernhard was tormented with questions, all the doctors engaged on the case were assailed and besieged, not merely by friends and acquaintances, but by complete strangers in voices that quivered with anxiety.

All the German and foreign newspapers organised special information services, every friend of the house was beset by a crowd of journalists. Among the enquiries of professional curiosity came a constantly recurring phrase: "You don't know me, but I have heard you are friendly with the Stresemann family—can you please tell me . . ." Grief for this sudden, senseless, dreadful fight with death lay like a shadow over everyone. Gustav Stresemann was the most surprised at the seriousness of his own condition. He had always thought of illness as something in the nature of an act of will, a slackening of the power of spiritual resistance, which would suddenly return in the fullness of its strength and sweep him upwards to the highest point of life. He read the verdict in the eyes of the doctors and every look at them plunged him deeper into despair. More agonising than all the pain, the horrible oppression on the centre of his forehead, the weakness that held all his members in a kind of paralysis, was the atmosphere that surrounded him, the ill-disguised anxiety on everyone's face, and the absence of a friendly voice to say—"There's nothing much the matter with you."

He sank into an abyss of prostration, and lay there apathetic with waxen face, shut sunken eyes, and bloodless lips, until one morning he himself suddenly

emerged from his coma with a request for a homœopath whom he specially trusted. The professors were opposed to this intrusion at such an hour when the patient's life hung by a thread, but he exerted all his remaining will-power, and they yielded as one yields to an unreasonable child.

When the man in whom he trusted more than in any professors had left the room, the first painful smile stole over his lips. He pitted his old imperturbable faith against the ruthless reality in his own body, and his will to live, that had for one moment been extinguished, thenceforward aided a renewal of faith in the efforts of the doctors.

"I would not make it so easy for death as all that," he said with a smile to his first visitors. His gaze wandered longingly to the tree-tops he could see framed in his window: "It would have been hard to go just now—besides I have still some more work to do." He had none of that interest in himself that dominates the convalescent on his return to life. He evaded all questions about his condition, and made his visitors tell him all the news. He wanted to know everything he had missed in the weeks of his illness. He had the papers read to him, and fought a bitter fight with the doctors for every interview and every visitor. But it was not merely home and foreign politics in which he was interested. There was a pile of books on his night-table which he read when his headache passed off a little, or which he got someone to read to him. His special favourite was Maurois' *Disraeli*, which he would discuss in great detail, as though there were at the moment nothing more important than to decide the ideal form for biography.

His breathing was laborious—drops of sweat burst out upon his forehead, and from time to time his face contorted involuntarily with a twinge of pain, but his spirit stood out against any traffic with weakness.

Thus began Gustav Stresemann's heroic struggle with himself. He was now placed under strict medical observation. A skilful and friendly nurse never left the house. Frau Stresemann watched over him, she became an inexorable Cerberus to every visitor; she tried to spare him all effort and excitement, and contended with him over every glass of water, his drinking, by the doctors' orders, being reduced to a minimum. She knew how to circumvent all his schoolboy stratagems. "One would never have imagined that so charming a wife could be so strict," he said with a smile, affectionately stroking her hand.

There was a touch of hardness in Käthe Stresemann's expression in those days. She exerted all her strength to put from her the dread that was always lurking in the background. And she fought a bitter fight against her husband's illness and against the smiling obstinacy that always came over him as soon as he felt faintly better. For Käthe Stresemann the world was now summarily divided into two parts—her husband's friends and his enemies; not merely his political enemies, but those who made claims upon his strength, who burdened him with questions, demanded decisions, and whose visits left him exhausted.

At first it seemed as though death would be repulsed by the sick man's savage determination and his unshakeable confidence; but death was merely watching until his time should come. After a few weeks, during which he made some progress to recovery, came the

beginning of the end. He had a slight stroke, which paralysed him for a few hours, and gave him a foretaste of the ultimate ordeal.

With eyes from which the shadow of fear was thenceforward never absent, Gustav Stresemann looked out upon a now altered world. As soon as his temporarily paralysed mouth could form articulate words, his fight with death was no longer a struggle for his own life, but a despairing attempt to complete an achievement, to bring a task to its conclusion.

In the meantime the German elections of 20th May resulted in a swing to the Left that represented an endorsement of the policy of conciliation. His own party, in spite of its election poster, had suffered a defeat; it was possible that this entrenchment of a party behind a leader, who, as was well known, had to contend with opposition in his own ranks, had thrust public opinion still further to the Left, where it expected to find more genuine exponents of this policy. The German Nationals were paid out for their wavering policy of opposition, in so far as those who were dissatisfied with their indecisive attitude went to strengthen the extreme elements of the Right.

The victory of the Left in Germany came a month after the victory of the Conservative Centre in France. The French people had chosen a Poincaré Chamber, while in the German Reichstag the Socialist benches had almost reached the centre of the half circle. Once again the two peoples were moving in an opposite direction.

A Socialist Chancellor formed the first Cabinet in accordance with the elections. A Government of the great coalition completed the circle begun five years

before. The first Finance Minister of the Stresemann Cabinet came back. But Gustav Stresemann had more trouble over this Cabinet than over his first Government. The People's Party, which had grown quite demoralised as a result of his illness and absence, had been frightened by the outcome of the elections and let the elements of the Right have the upper hand. Although Stresemann had charged Wolfgang to inform Müller and Hilferding that he would join the Government, the People's Party declined to enter the Cabinet. The sick man—and he was a very sick man—who was then in the sanatorium on the Bühlerhöhe, had to interfere personally to secure the formation of a Cabinet. He put himself above all party politics, circumvented his party, and again and in writing promised Hermann Müller his co-operation.

This "cannon-shot from the Bühlerhöhe," as it was described, brought Stresemann bitter enemies within his own party. But the agitation soon died down. The Müller Cabinet seemed well adapted to reap the harvest sowed five years before. German industry was experiencing its time of great prosperity, as was soon officially attested by the Agent for Reparations. If some further successes could be achieved in foreign politics, if it were possible to secure the evacuation of the Rhineland, then the policy that was identified with the Government of the Left would win a lasting victory in Germany.

The Government of Hermann Müller was greeted with high hopes. If Stresemann remained alive, Germany's calm and peaceful progress seemed assured.

Meantime the world was preparing to take an important step on the way to peace.

The negotiations at Thoiry had indeed remained fruitless, but Briand decided to approach the idea of peace from a different angle. When he realised that the scheme of co-operation with Germany envisaged at Thoiry was now barred, he tried a less direct route which would lead to the same goal; the pacification of the world. It was not in his character to run his head against a wall, but he had the quality of resilient natures who are never defeated, and after every blow return to the contest with undiminished vigour. Repulsed at one point, he attacked the problem at another, which for the moment promised success.

America's hegemony, made manifest in terms of figures, expressed itself in attempts to exercise a moral influence on the sceptical opinion of the older world. Briand took account of this factor, and put before the new world a proposal for a great pact to outlaw war. Contrary to his expectation the ball was speedily returned. The scheme of a great oath to observe peace, not involving any more exact obligations, quickly won a host of supporters across the Atlantic. It then found its way to the various Cabinets of Europe, where it was sure of at least respectful welcome.

Shortly before his illness the memorandum was communicated to Stresemann. He sent an approving reply, but for him who at Thoiry had thought to see realities within his grasp, this pact was too indefinite, too general, too much of a *beau geste* without practical effect. "It is one of those questions to which a decent man cannot give the answer No," said Stresemann; "but like all questions of conscience to which there is only one answer, its moral value is greater than its practical significance. If I asked a murderer of to-

morrow whether he approved of murder in principle, he would answer, No. But will such a question prevent the murder? Still, it will be a good thing to have such a pact. The more often men talk of peace, the sooner will they begin to think about it."

In the course of the summer the pact came into existence. The American Secretary of State conveyed his personal request that the German Foreign Minister should be asked to take part in the signature in Paris on 27th August. At that time only a very few people had any idea that Stresemann had just had his first stroke. A journey to Paris seemed madness. The doctors informed Stresemann that they could take no responsibility in the matter. But the sick man clung to his dream of a settlement that would mean an earlier evacuation of occupied Germany and the start of a new era in European relations. He had so often given an unexpected turn to events in a personal conversation. Perhaps there would be an opportunity in a talk with Poincaré, perhaps the exalted atmosphere of the act of signature would be favourable for a consideration of the older plan. The stabilisation of the franc had already deprived the German counter-offer of its value. But there were other possibilities—there must be others, if the whole purpose of his policy had not been misconceived. "After the elections," Briand had said. . . . He still clung to the Thoiry dream—the incorrigible dreamer who held fast to his faith even in the face of death.

It was indeed a dying man that lay in the train to Paris. Doctor, sick-nurse, and the faithful Bernhard tended him with eyes that were full of fear. As he climbed into the train he walked more heavily than

usual, though he carried himself erect, with head thrown back. But his face was pale with a terrible greenish pallor, and the life seemed to have faded out of his bright eyes. His swollen feet would hardly carry him. He gasped out every word with an infinity of effort. He had managed to contort his face into a smile as he shook hands with the French Ambassador and said good-bye to his wife. But when he got into the saloon, he collapsed into a seat, and as his gaze wandered round the compartment a terrifying thought passed through his mind. Was this narrow box on wheels, that bore him rumbling through the night, to be his coffin? He was always frightened at the idea of death, but that night it was nearer to him than it had ever been.

He went to sleep with the help of an injection; the doctor and his faithful satellites sat together and talked in whispers about what might or might not happen. Bernhard leaned against the window, his fresh boyish face drawn with grief. When day dawned the nightmare lifted slightly; the night had passed without catastrophe. The Minister sat at breakfast in the dining car, with a rug tucked about his freezing limbs, and the autumn sunshine brought a little colour into the deathly pallor of his face. Paris . . . how he had been going to enjoy his visit; and now the city, that he had invested in his imagination with all the glamour of romance, was approaching, and he would hardly see it, for he had to preserve the pitiful remains of his fading strength, and his doctors had only permitted the journey on condition that he obeyed their instructions without question. He sat like a prisoner between the professor, the secretaries and the sick-nurse. He had mastered

all the obstacles in life, but his iron will was powerless against his wretched body. His pallid icy hands lay feeble and empty on the table in front of him, the hands of a dying man, who still had the ambition to sway the destinies of nations.

Paris: the city that had so roused his curiosity, of which he was to catch one glimpse before his end from the windows of his car. It was the first time since 1870 that a Foreign Minister had set foot in the city. The representative of a conquered people did not come to plead for favours; he came to found a peace, at the urgent request of a representative of a land that then dominated the world. Kellogg had repeatedly invited him to be present at the signature, and invited him with such marked emphasis on the importance he set on his participation that it would have been almost an unfriendly gesture not to respond to so urgent a summons. All-powerful America was courting the German statesman. He could well be proud, both of the career that lay behind him and of the work that he had done. If only it were not for the throbbing in his throat and the agonising oppression at his chest.

Paris: the Ambassador on the platform, tall, slim, and ceremonious, the German colony in black coats and tall hats like the guests at a funeral. On every face a look of restrained anxiety. They all knew that the man who got out of the train had risked his life for this journey. The representative of the Quai d'Orsay shook him by the hand. Even the official solely concerned with the ceremonial of the visit, felt a rush of sympathy within him at the sight of those vacant exhausted eyes, and imparted a human warmth to his handshake, beyond what was required by

etiquette. Hurrying photographers, pushing jostling journalists, a snapping of shutters and the faint hum of the film apparatus—and a medley of voices, clattering trunks, and shouted orders ; all the agitated confusion of arrival. Behind the barriers waited a huge crowd.

Handclapping and applause—and a sudden shrill whistle. Another and another, from the fringe of the crowd, pitiless and persistent, through all the din of shouts and clapping. It transpired later that the offenders were Germans. Stresemann got into his car ; his foot dragged a little, and his face, which the excitement of arrival had faintly flushed, grew sickly pale once more. His mouth curled into a bitter smile. The official representatives of France were full of embarrassed explanations. They must be the whistles of the police, or a group of the Action Française, or . . . "I understand," said Stresemann to relieve them of their perplexity ; "Briand, too, has his irrepressibles." He smiled good-naturedly and drove off. Sick unto death, but not a broken man.

At the German Embassy, where he took up his abode, Herr von Hoesch and his staff bestowed all their energy and skill in averting the throng of politicians, journalists, men with genuine interests and important information, as well as the merely curious. Official business was conducted under a silencer, as it were—like the subdued whispers in a hospital. Stresemann slept, sparing all his strength for the great interview with Poincaré. He awaited that moment with a feeling of tension that at once stimulated and unnerved him.

Could this be Germany's pitiless foe ? A pleasant elderly gentleman greeted him with effusive courtesy.

He was careful to say how glad he was that the great German statesman had met with such a friendly reception in Paris. Stresemann, mistrustful of so much unexpected good nature, used the method of direct interrogation that he had constantly found so effective. Did Herr Poincaré believe in the success of the Franco-German policy?—he tried to pose his smiling interlocutor—or did he believe that the obstacles to a *rapprochement* were insurmountable? But Poincaré did not allow himself to be disconcerted by the method of direct attack. He had prepared himself too carefully for that interview. He had sent for a pile of papers, studied them until late into the night, and noted the individual points in his clear minute script. He did not allow himself to lose command of the conversation. Instead of giving a direct answer he too asked questions. What about Germany? Were there not professors there who indulged in ideas of revenge? And the anti-French manifestoes in Germany? Such incidents were most regrettable. And the German propaganda in Alsace-Lorraine? What, too, about the official support of the *Heimatbund*? Can the Foreign Minister assure him that the German Government really had no share in it? How did it come about that . . . ? He had studied his papers to some advantage. If the questions had not been accompanied by so charming a smile, they would have sounded like a cross-examination.

Stresemann skilfully parried all these attacks and sought an opportunity to pass to the counter-attack. But Poincaré's catalogue was not complete. The amalgamation of Austria—did Herr Stresemann realise how deeply such a policy endangered the peaceful

development of Europe? Stresemann replied that at the moment it was gesture condemned to failure. The German Government had, in agreement with Herr Seipel, decided to regard the question as outside practical politics.

Such were the soothing phrases issued by the authorities whenever this particular scare was raised. Gustav Stresemann handed them on to Poincaré, but something within him rebelled against this bloodless attitude, and stirred his romantic heart. The love of Austria is an element in German romanticism. "We in Germany are to-day more Americanised than any other people in Europe," he began to explain to Poincaré; "but at the bottom of our hearts we feel that in the stress of modern life we have lost a fragment of our soul. What we lack to-day of calm and inner poise, we find at our very frontiers. Vienna and Austria represent to us a land that lives another life than ours, a life that in earlier days at least was more peaceful and contemplative than any that we know." His words glowed with the warmth of his emotion. Suddenly he stopped. Had he not gone too far? Could Poincaré follow him? Would the fervour of his words not seem suspicious? And yet Poincaré's face revealed nothing of the triumphant air of one who had extorted a confession. Stresemann had unwittingly struck a note to which Poincaré was very sensitive. The defence of national individuality against the advance of Americanism—how often had he meditated on the theme, and how deeply he felt on this question as affecting his own country.

"I am entirely in agreement with you, Herr Stresemann; the influence of the United States is so

powerful that we must do our utmost to prevent it destroying the individuality of every European State that possesses one. All of us in Europe are suffering more or less from the situation in which we stand towards the United States."

Here was the point of contact for which Stresemann had been looking. Here he could resume the conversation where the famous interview with Briand had terminated. This time he would not let the threads out of his hands. He started by explaining to Poincaré the advantages that would result from a common handling of the Reparations question ; and Poincaré nodded his agreement as Stresemann proceeded—very cautiously at first. He felt that an opportunity of reaching an understanding was ready to his hand, and the flame of hope blazed up in him once more. . . . Suddenly he became aware, to his amazement, that Poincaré was abandoning his thesis of the occupation of the Rhineland as a pledge of security and was merely referring to the question of a guarantee for Reparations payments. So the spectre of *sécurité*, that he thought had been laid by the Locarno Treaty but had none the less reappeared, was now banished by Poincaré himself. He heaved a sigh of relief.

But as he listened with strained attention to the Frenchman, he was suddenly startled by the question : Had not the suggestion of linking up evacuation with a Reparations settlement been discussed at Thoiry ? Why had the German Government failed to follow it up with positive proposals ? A blood-red cloud swept across Stresemann's vision. Poincaré's voice proceeded inexorably : Whose fault was it that the Thoiry settlement had come to nothing ? Had it been

wrecked by the demands of America, by the reluctance of American financiers to produce the money; or had there been a change of opinion in Germany?

The sick man struggled for breath. He did not understand how much French domestic politics lay behind the question—he was merely aware that an attempt was being made to make him responsible for the failure of a policy which he had worn himself out for years in trying to achieve. All his impatience, all the torment of futile delay, all his burning disappointment burst forth from him in that moment. He forgot the questions that he himself wanted to ask Poincaré—he forgot everything under the shock of this shattering reproach.

If Poincaré wanted to hear the whole story of Thoiry, then he should have it. The precarious wall of reserve was broken down. And Poincaré listened to the true history of Thoiry, gasped out in a rush of words that went too fast for the interpreter. The sick man quite lost control of himself as he poured out all the details to the silent listener. He told him of Briand's request that the matter should not be pursued, as public opinion was now against him and his position might be endangered.

Poincaré listened with a perfectly blank face; not so much as the twitch of a muscle revealed his reactions to Stresemann's narrative.

As Stresemann went on, he did not notice how the moments were flying, how the precious hours allowed him by the doctors were slipping out of his hands. Just as he was about to come back to the point from which the conversation had started, and take advantage of the opening offered by Poincaré, he was interrupted

in the middle of a sentence by a *huissier* who suddenly entered the room. The doctor was most insistent that the interview should end, and Poincaré at once stood up so that the sick man should not attempt any further exertion.

The interview was brought to a close with expressions of sincere regret; Poincaré congratulated Stresemann on his work, and spoke with great regard of the sick man's courage in facing the journey to Paris. He himself who had been in bad health for some time knew what it meant to strain the system to the last limit. And as he accompanied the German Foreign Minister down the broad marble staircase of the Ministry of Finance his expression was that of a man who has recognised his adversary as his equal.

Stresemann was the first to affix his signature to the Kellogg Pact. His hand was steady, and he wrote his name in his usual flowing and unbroken script. He stood in the glaring light of the great candelabra, with the eyes of the world upon him. The American Secretary of State nodded to himself in satisfaction. He picked up the pen, held his trembling half-paralysed fingers steady with his other hand, and carefully guided the pen across the white sheet, moving his head with the movements of his hand. For him it was a great day. His name would always remain associated with this pact. God had permitted him to see the fulfilment of his great idea.

Another and a much younger man wiped the drops of sweat from his forehead and thanked his Creator for allowing him at least enough strength to survive the day.

Outside the Foreign Ministry the road was blocked

with a mighty throng. Down the great staircase, past the gold-laced lackeys rigid against the wall, the rulers of the world made their way to the red-tapestried apartments that had witnessed so many solemn occasions. An array of bright ribbons and glittering orders, set off by shining white shirt-fronts and the dull black of evening coats. Only the American Secretary of State and the German Foreign Minister stood there undecorated, like representatives of a new world among the splendours of world diplomacy. The German Foreign Minister was one of the first to take his leave. His heavy task was over. The members of the French Cabinet stood aside in two rows as he passed towards the door. He walked with something like the stiff gait of the officers of the old regime, which he had heard tell of in his boyhood, but his broad shoulders, that seemed to symbolise all the endurance of his race, were erect and square. But how heavily he raised his feet, and how carefully he felt his way down the marble staircase. Briand watched him for a while. His eyes were dimmed with grief. Another, a friend of Stresemann, was also watching the Minister. Their eyes met. Briand stretched out his hand impulsively; he felt the need of saying some consoling word. "I found him much better to-day; much fresher and more full of life. I hope he will get well now—for his own sake, for his country, and for myself. . . . I am very fond of the Doctor"—and again he said softly, as though to himself: "Je l'aime bien le docteur. . . ."

Outside in the street the crowd was cheering the departing Minister. Not a whistle to be heard this time. Either M. Chiappe, the Prefect of Police, had

taken special measures, or the people below had become aware that they had before them a man who had been ready to risk his life, and was deserving of their respect . . . " c'est quand même épatant ce qu'il a fait —car il a l'air très malade. . . ." " Still," said another; " there won't be any evacuation; we can't sacrifice our last security."

As the train moved out of the railway station the French Chef du Protocole heaved a sigh of relief as he went home. " Thank God," he said to himself; " it would have been awful if he had died on our hands here in Paris."

XV

ROCKS AT THE HARBOUR MOUTH

THE Imperial Chancellor Müller appeared at Geneva in place of the Foreign Minister, who had gone straight from Paris to Baden-Baden for treatment. He was a novice in that environment. With all the superficial awkwardness of the unusually astute party functionary he was afflicted with an incapacity which he shared with so many—and those the best—of the representatives of his country; he could not present his genuine knowledge, his ability, and his policy, in a favourable light. His slow deliberate ways, his preternaturally cautious and sometimes slovenly habit of speech, in addition to the authoritative tone which he had acquired in the leadership of his party, produced no very good effect in the atmosphere of Geneva. He was strangely lacking in the faculty of arousing confidence, which Stresemann found so easy, at least in an international atmosphere. He was lacking, too, in the fundamental experience which all German negotiators have to acquire at the outset of their career—with the exception of Stresemann, whose inborn expansiveness spared him this lesson—so much so that their exaggerated conscientiousness, their caution and fear of responsibility, is regarded by foreigners as secretiveness, and opens up an abyss of distrust.

Perhaps, too, he was unpopular at Geneva because he was not Stresemann: perhaps the strained inter-

national situation called for an outbreak to clear the air. In any case, it so happened that the speech he made to the Assembly accentuated the first unfavourable impression. The speech was intended as a warning to the League not to disappoint the expectations of humanity, which had been awakened by much talk of peace while the world's longing for peace remained unrealised. Müller's acquaintance with the feelings of the great mass of the people, his long experience of their constant tension between hope and fulfilment, made it necessary for him in all honesty to warn the Assembly that the reputation of the League was at stake.

But the deep earnestness that brought this exhortation to his lips was accompanied by a certain aggressiveness of expression and some sharply phrased demands, so that his warning became an accusation, and his emotion degenerated into special pleading. He spoke of the world's policy of unlimited armament, of the continued production of the instruments of force, and of the one-sided disarmament of Germany by the durance of victory. His great booming voice lent added emphasis to his words, and—as fate would have it, at a time of tension—it was an error in translation that turned the scale and led to the regrettable sequel.

Müller spoke of the " double face " of international policy, by which he meant its Janus head of promise and fulfilment. In the French translation this appeared as a " politique qui présente une double face," *i.e.* a double-faced or deceitful policy, and so it was retranslated into German.

Such, too, was the interpretation that Briand put on

the phrase "politique à double face." He remained seated when the Imperial Chancellor came down from the tribune, and a flush of indignation spread over his lined and blue-veined face. His nerves, also, were strained to breaking-point. He, too, felt the burden of this enforced waiting, and, as it happened, he, like Stresemann, was ill, and his disease made him feel tired and irritable.

In the first place he saw his work endangered by the impatience that found ever louder expression in the German Press, and the successive demands that now were made. It was already difficult enough for him to get the policy of an earlier evacuation adopted in the face of the opposition in his own country. If further demands were to be made, if the language of ill-humour was to make the negotiations more difficult, it would hardly be possible to bring the original complex of problems to a solution. "This is a clear case for a surgical operation," he said warmly to his friends; "we must disengage the really important matter from the confusion of fresh claims, before any negotiations can begin." And the speech in which he answered Müller's observations was directed to this end.

He waved his arms in excitement as he had done two years before, and pointed with outspread fingers to the German benches. But they were not words of reconciliation that fell from his lips—those dulcet tones of peace had turned to wrath. He understood the impatience that he had to answer, he admitted that several countries had more justification for it than others, but—and here he fixed Müller with a look of flashing scorn, and his tone was expressive of his

contempt for considerations of party that he himself had laid aside: "We are not party men here: the League of Nations is not an International of parties but of peoples."... "One single European nation," he continued, "has made the dramatic gesture, and declared itself ready for complete disarmament." And the ghost of Russia hovered on the horizon and flung a pallid terror upon the assembly. Then Briand conjured up the slumbering fear of the mighty organising capacity of German industry, of the creative genius of the nation, that would make it possible for the instruments of peace to be quickly transformed into the tools of war. Even the demand for the protection of minorities which the Chancellor had put forward was pitilessly shattered. He reminded his audience that before the war hundreds of millions of men had lived as minorities, and that there had been no League of Nations to take care of them. The question of minorities must not be used to split the structure of governments and wreck the peace. "You must not," he said, "leave the way open for secret intrigues, which, disguised as high morality, may shake the safety of the world."

Briand's outburst fell like a thunderstorm upon the heads of the German delegation. Müller turned quite white as he listened, and a faint pallor stole over even Schubert's ruddy countenance. Old Count Apponyi, who was rather hard of hearing, had got up from his place and sat down near the German delegation so as to be better able to hear Briand's speech. The aged aristocrat was sitting beside the Socialist representatives of the German Reich, and was fully exposed to the storm of Briand's attack. From time to time a

distinct rustle of applause swept over the room, as though the fire of resentment against Germany were once more hissing into life. The reverberations of the war were not yet stilled, and Briand's words had re-awakened them.

Scarcely had the echoes of Briand's speech died away when a general exodus from the Press gallery began. The wooden staircase clattered under their hurrying footsteps. The representatives of world opinion rushed in breathless haste to devise some blaring headlines for Briand's lecture to the German Chancellor. As they jostled their way towards the doors they hastily questioned the more eminent of his colleagues. "What did you think of the speech?" said an American to the editor of a newspaper of the Left. "I think it means disaster for the Left," came the answer in a voice of deep concern as the interviewer hurried off.

In Germany the speech aroused a storm of indignation. The newspapers of the Right, which suddenly took up the defence of Müller's injured dignity, wrote it down as the end of Locarno; and the representatives of the Left feared also that it might be so. "Briand's speech," wrote Georg Bernhard, in a leading article entitled "Aristide Briand's Onslaught," "would have simply broken the neck of any Government less firmly based on the German parties."

In the sanatorium on the Bühlerhöhe Stresemann clung to the telephone, and made Henry Bernhard repeat Briand's actual words several times over. "It isn't possible," he muttered as he listened; "how could he have said such a thing?" His fists clenched, and fell powerless at his sides. He felt the impotence

of absence with redoubled force—all the thraldom of sickness. In spite of the doctor's protest he again rang up Geneva. "What is the feeling about this speech?" he kept on asking. The colour in his face came and went; and the excitement coursed through his sick organism like poison.

Meantime, in Geneva, the wave of excitement had died down. Briand was himself distressed at the impression produced by his speech. Its effect had gone far beyond his intention. On the following day he summoned the world Press and gave them explanations calculated to turn away wrath. He emphatically denied that he attributed any warlike intentions to the German Government, emphasised the fact that he regarded the outcome of the elections as a guarantee of peace, and stated repeatedly how hurt he had been by the charge of disingenuousness implied in the Chancellor's speech. When the storm had blown over, the representatives of the six Powers interested in the Reparations question were able to discuss their problems in a clearer atmosphere.

The kernel of the whole matter was the linking-up of evacuation, reparations, and the settlement of international debts. This demand was put forward by Poincaré on the advice, so it was said, of the Agent for Reparations, Parker Gilbert, who had latterly been a great deal in his company and had won his confidence. The connection between these questions was at first indignantly repudiated by the German negotiators, and it was the state of feeling in Germany and not any international considerations that induced them to yield. The revision of the Dawes Plan was more and more insistently demanded by the parties of the

Right, and political opposition came to a head in a struggle against the payment of tribute. Now that the demand for revision came from the French side the Germans found themselves forced to accept what they had not yet decided to claim. And the fact that this made them parties to a bargain instead of suppliants for consideration seemed to constitute so favourable an opportunity that the German negotiators finally agreed to treat these three questions as a whole.

There were also industrial as well as political factors to be taken into account. Germany was at the moment on a rising wave of prosperity; industrial development was proceeding with great rapidity. Rumours current in circles that were frequented by the Agent for Reparations indicated that the yearly report that was on the point of completion would contain a very favourable account of Germany's industrial position. It was the last year of the minimum annuity prescribed by the Dawes Plan. Next year the index of recovery was to come into force. It was no longer possible to ignore what was involved by Reparations payments, and this consideration, which was constantly before the minds of the politicians of commerce and the leaders of industry, was the deciding factor. The German Government expressed its readiness to fall in with the formation of a Reparations Committee.

The first months of winter passed in the negotiations and preliminaries for the great Reparations Conference. Every possible string was pulled in Germany to ensure that America should be a preponderating influence on the Committee. Schacht hoped for great things from the chairmanship of Owen

Young, with whom he was on excellent terms. Parker Gilbert exerted all his influence to induce his most authoritative fellow-countrymen to take part in the Conference, and to ensure that they should play the leading rôle.

When his report appeared in December it confirmed all the confidential reports, and indeed the picture it presented was even more definite and encouraging than the expected rosy description of the German industrial position. In these circumstances a speedy settlement was clearly indicated, and seemed more than ever in Germany's interests. Stresemann watched developments with a mixture of scepticism and impatience.

He had returned to Berlin in the late autumn. He had so far recovered as to be able to resume his official duties. But he had to husband his strength with the greatest care; the light of his existence was burning like a dimmed lamp in a sick chamber. For him, who felt so bitterly the failure of his physical organism, every delay on the way to the goal was a torture. He was agonised by every hitch in the preliminaries to the Conference, because he was afraid that his strength would not hold out. At the same time his instinct revolted against a settlement that he felt to be premature. He was not conversant enough with Reparations questions to be able to find suitable arguments with which to reply to his advisers. Lord d'Abernon, with whom he still kept in very close touch, confirmed him in his scepticism. That eminent connoisseur of the Reparations problem considered that the time had not yet come for a solution. "It is still much too soon," he said significantly, just as he had previously

uttered a warning against a final computation of the total sum of German indebtedness.

"Either the Conference will break down," he said, "or it will end with a result that will need revision in a few years. The industrial situation in Germany is too obscure for it to be possible to make a final estimate of her capacity to pay. Moreover, it is still too soon to attack the question of interallied debts. The result will be a half-settlement or a settlement on the wrong lines, which in the long run will satisfy neither France nor Germany."

This was a clear expression by an expert of the objections that he himself only dimly realised, but he could not resist the urgency of the Allies nor bring forward any argument against the premature settlement so ardently desired in Germany. The pressure exerted upon him from every side found a response in his infinite yearning to escape from public life into the peace of a contemplative existence. He who had hitherto been so lavish of himself now harboured an almost melancholy dream of quiet, composure, and meditation. For the little joys of life, of which he had been deprived, this belated paradise of rest and freedom from anxiety should bring him compensation. "What sort of life is this? Food that I have no time to taste, this constant watchfulness and fear that are always at my heels. If I did not hope that I should one day rediscover my own soul, and take some juster view of these last few harassing years, I would not cling to the fragment of life that is left to me." The doctors had made it quite clear to him that he could only hope to prolong his life in strict retirement under a milder southern sky.

"Later, of course," he added, "later." He believed in that "later." His life would indeed have been meaningless if it did not close with the reward of labour, with a contemplative survey of the fragment of history that lay behind him. A particular picture often returned to him in his dreams. He used to describe it in a sing-song voice rather like that in which children tell themselves fairy tales.

"I often see myself on a white terrace high above the sea,—a broad blue expanse under the glittering sunshine; I am lying in a long chair, and a cool breeze is blowing off the water. I wrap the shawl more closely round my legs; a book falls fluttering from my knees on to the floor—I let it lie. I am content that it is there within reach, for the sea is a spectacle of which my eyes are never tired, and over which I can dream for hours. I see the waves approaching from a far horizon, I follow their play until they break upon the beach; many thoughts pass through my mind, a whole wealth of memories that I have not yet really grasped. This scene is so vivid to me that I know every pattern on the paved floor, and I am only surprised that I do not feel it with my finger-tips beside the chair in which I sit."

In those days, which he secretly described as the days of the white terrace, he was to find all that he had missed in his previous life, all the delights of which he felt he had been cheated. He wanted to sleep a great deal, read books for which he never now had time, and write his memoirs which were already coherent in his mind.

These memoirs were also to solve what was for him a burning question: they were to provide the pecuniary

basis of his existence. The publishing house of Ullstein had made him a magnificent offer, but he was bound by agreement to another firm. For the first time in his life money became a serious consideration. He had never thought of securing his own existence nor of providing for his family. For the benefit of his party, or of his unlucky newspaper *Die Zeit*, he often made claims on rich friends or ambitious financiers. Thanks to his wife's good management, his salary, with the additional allowances for entertainment, sufficed for his subsistence. Only very rarely did the discrepancy between the expenses of his position and his means come into his mind. "Every Ambassador," he once said, "every Minister, almost, whom I receive in my house, is a Crœsus compared with me; every bank director makes me feel like a clerk. The career of a politician in Germany calls for a great deal of idealism—or ambition. But perhaps it is just as well, or Ministers would be even less anxious to give up their portfolios than they are now," he added with a laugh.

It was not until now, when the thought of death had taken root in his mind, that he fully realised his desperate position. "When I leave here one of these days," he once said ruefully to a friend, "I shall be reduced to beggary. I have spent all my savings this year. It is an awful thought that every little shop-keeper can provide for his wife and not leave her destitute, whereas I was able to do nothing."

That "later" time of which he dreamed came to mean a time when he had to make provision for his family; and he looked forward with increasingly urgent impatience to his departure from political life.

Meantime he devoted himself to his political work with an energy much above his strength. When the December Assembly of the League of Nations was not far off the doctors did their utmost to dissuade him from going to Geneva. "No," he said, "I was not there in September—I must be there this time." He asked that the meeting might take place on the Riviera or in the Ticino. Finally Lugano was chosen. But it was a hard and bitter winter, and the journey was a venture on which he hesitated to embark.

"I cannot with decency refuse," he said. "The whole machine has been set in motion on my account, and the place of meeting shifted to Lugano. I must go, although I really think it quite unnecessary."

He went through a period of acute disbelief in the League of Nations. "The whole institution is a gross piece of make-believe. All this talk of equality between small and large States is nonsense. The votes of the small Powers will simply be attached like ciphers to the vote of a great Power, and thus resolutions will be manœuvred. What has the League really achieved up to date? Herr Briand is always pointing out how it prevented war between Jugoslavia and Bulgaria. But if he and Chamberlain had got together and addressed a sharp note to both these Powers, war would have been just as effectively prevented without the presence of fifty other States to look on. The League had no part in what was done at Locarno; it had not even a hand in that Anglican Church service in Paris—the Kellogg Pact. All important questions, all difficult questions, had been postponed to the Greek Kalends. Disarmament? Not an inch of progress has been made. Industrial

peace—abolition of tariffs? All this has ended in pious resolutions. A powerful machine has been called into existence; the bureaucracy swallows the money, and the result is nil. Not even minorities have been protected. The nations have been promised the moon out of the sky and have to content themselves with a flood of paper. How I should like to say what I think of them! . . ."

It was in such a mood that Stresemann went to Lugano, and he did in fact say what he thought, but not quite in the way which he had contemplated. Just like Briand's outburst of anger, Stresemann's plain speaking was the result of a mixture of motives. Of these the most important was his disappointment at the weakness of the League. Added to this was his irritation at the delay in evacution, his fear of an imminent revulsion of feeling in Germany, which he attributed to the Government's ill-success in foreign policy and perhaps also to the after-effects of the precedence question at Geneva. He was also tired, irritable and dispirited. He tried to ascertain whether the representative of Poland proposed to address the Assembly; and a misinterpreted utterance of Zaleski was taken to indicate a negative. When, therefore, the Polish Foreign Minister got up and accused the German *Kulturbund* in Upper Silesia of responsibility for all the troubles in that district he drew down upon his head all Stresemann's thunder. "I fairly let him have it," said Stresemann later. The delegates recoiled in alarm before Stresemann's onslaught. Briand, who did not understand a word, stared at him with wide-open eyes. When he heard the French translation, he heaved a sigh of relief, for

he had expected something worse. He it was who, when the wave of indignation had somewhat died down, used his good offices with Zaleski and soothed the ruffled feelings of the Assembly.

This incident at Lugano brought Stresemann the reputation of a strong man, and much increased his popularity at home, a popularity that persisted, inasmuch as this "cleansing storm," thanks to Briand's astuteness, had no unpleasant consequences.

In the next few months politics disappeared for a while from the world stage and gave place to the industrial experts. In February the great Reparations Conference was opened in Paris and held the world in suspense. The course of the negotiations seemed to justify the scepticism of those who uttered a warning against premature settlement. The Conference made no progress. The report of the Agent for Reparations, which a German representative in Paris, who was intimately acquainted with the Reparations question, predicted would have catastrophic consequences for Germany, insensibly dominated the negotiations and defined the attitude of the American representatives. When Schacht came back to Berlin to report progress, he bitterly complained that the Americans had left the German negotiators in the lurch, and Stresemann could not withhold the malicious retort that Herr Schacht had himself pressed for the appointment of Owen Young, from whom he had expected vigorous support.

In April the Paris Conference had reached a deadlock. Stresemann followed the negotiations with anxious impatience. Now that a solution of the Reparations question had been made a preliminary to a

political settlement, he awaited its conclusion with feverish tension. But he was careful not to take any direct part in what was going on. The relations between himself and Schacht had gradually become so extremely precarious that he had to be doubly cautious. Once the predominance of the experts had been recognised, they had to be allowed a free hand. It was not until Schacht invaded the political sphere that he retaliated. "I and I alone am responsible for Foreign Politics," he announced indignantly; "as long as I am here I won't stand any interference."

Lord Revelstoke's sudden death proved the salvation of the Conference; it gave a pretext for postponement, with a possibility of reopening negotiations later on. The fragments were meticulously reassembled. The experts representing the heavy industries withdrew from the negotiations. All seemed lost. But the general fear of an ineffectual conclusion, and of appearing ridiculous in the eyes of the world, was the force that kept the Conference together. On 7th June, after remarkably rapid progress in the last few days, the Young Plan was signed in Paris.

In the preceding weeks Stresemann's impatience was intensified by another anxiety, and indeed it was probably this fresh apprehension that led to so speedy a conclusion to the Conference. He who was gifted with so keen a sense for the oscillations of public opinion, detected an imminent counter-stroke by the parties of the Right, which he watched with the utmost dismay. The movement at first spread entirely beneath the surface, and quietly gathered all the discontented elements to its support. It started as a reaction to the result of the late elections, and

its real intention was a struggle against Social Democracy.

After Stresemann's ineffectual visit to Paris and the unfortunate incident at the Geneva Assembly, the movement became more apparent. Its watchword was "Failure of the Policy of Conciliation." . . . "The spirit of Locarno is dead—France has broken her promises—and we have therefore recovered our freedom of negotiation"—so the argument continued. The damage to the nation's international prestige which Hermann Müller brought back with him from Geneva, sensibly weakened the Social Democracy. All these feelings were working confusedly in the public mind though they had not as yet found open utterance; but Stresemann, with alert and anxious eyes, watched these signs of imminent upheaval.

A confirmation of his policy, a success along his line of progress, was more than ever necessary.

After the conference of the experts, the politicians were now to have their say. Before the Reparations conference had actually been convened, there was a meeting of the League of Nations in Madrid. Stresemann forced himself to attend. It was a hot spring that year, and Stresemann suffered inhumanly from the heat. He suffered from the long train journey, and all its accompanying noise and unrest. The awful exhaustion that now came over him more often, and lasted longer every time, brought home to him that every effort deprived him of a little of his life. His friends implored him to go home. "You are killing yourself," said his wife with tears in her eyes. And his sons begged him to think of himself at last.

"I cannot," he said, with the sadness of death in his

eyes, "it would be like deserting the colours. It is too soon . . . or too late . . ." he added in a moment or two, with an echo of despair in his voice.

The reaction to the Right in Germany was now pro gressing with gigantic strides. The artificial structure of prosperity erected upon foreign loans was beginning to totter. Industrial conditions grew worse from day to day. The soaring optimism of the industrial world had turned in a few months to a deep depression. The dizzy boom in prices on the Stock Exchange was followed by days of abysmal collapse. Industrial discontent provided a favourable soil for the unrest that precedes a change of political direction. The cry went up for a dictator, as it does in all dark hours, and was no longer to be stilled. "Dictatorships are in demand at present," said Stresemann half in jest a few months before, "and we must imitate the fashion as we always do." Now he was really afraid: "I have the feeling," he said, "that I am truly Germany's last defence against Fascist chaos. What happens after me . . ." his hand described a gesture of infinite weariness ". . . but so long as I am here, I cannot leave my post."

It was not merely this loyalty to a lost cause that forced him to hold out; it was the hope that a speedy evacuation would stem the wave of reaction and even force it backwards. "We have not yet been able to show the people any tangible advantage from our policy. Evacuation has become a vital matter; it will not merely relieve the population of the Rhine from the burden of foreign occupation, and the Empire from the stigma of constraint; it is now a question of life or death for the German Republic. To-day, the

movement to the Right may be held up by a justification of our policy, and to-morrow it may not be too late—but if the decision is too long delayed . . ." He did not finish the sentence. He who a few short years ago was dreaming of a popular imperialism, was now, in the phrase of his old party colleague Kahl, protecting the Republic with his own body.

At last the conference at The Hague drew near. Contrary to all expectation it developed into a sharp Anglo-French contest which culminated in Snowden's reckless attack on Chéron, and was only settled by an arbitrary interpretation of the formula in dispute.

Stresemann marked the struggle with that blend of disquiet and a certain contempt which was the result of his approaching end. He intervened from time to time in the interests of goodwill, just as during the London conference he had contrived to moderate Snowden's aggressiveness. But his forced inaction while watching two former Allies absorbed in a violent struggle over a relatively small sum, when he was kept in an agony of suspense over the destiny of Europe, stirred him to an intensity of bitterness. He hoped to get from Briand a clear promise of evacuation, but Briand himself had too many interests to consider and had to wait until the close of the conference. Then all the torment of the last few years burst forth from the sick man, and he wrote a letter to Briand, one of those letters that do not seem composed of words but are written in the very heart's blood of the writer's agony. He wanted to say all this in person, but he had a feeling that Briand was avoiding him; so he wrote, and in his letter said that he would resign if the evacuation of occupied Germany was not agreed.

This letter was the culmination of the tragedy of waiting that Stresemann had now had to endure for three long years. " In the course of our constant meetings," wrote Marcel Ray, " I have had opportunities of realising that there was, for Stresemann, something tragic in the inevitable three years' delay between Thoiry and The Hague, and that he passed those years in the most agonising doubts as to his physical endurance and its limits. . . . "

At last he saw the object he so passionately desired within his reach. With Henderson's support he succeeded in securing a definite date for evacuation. On 30th June, 1931, the hour of Germany's freedom was to strike. The liquidation of the war was completed. The martyrdom of delay was at an end. A fresh page was turned over in the book of history. Gustav Stresemann's work was done.

The conference seemed to have come to a dead stop. The atmosphere of friction between the two former Allies had grown almost unendurable. It looked as though the conference would collapse at any moment. For once the rôles seemed to have been transposed. Stresemann's bitter pessimism contrasted with Briand's optimistic faith. " Although we are confronted by serious difficulties," said the latter earnestly, " I refuse to contemplate the possibility of such a conference as this ending in failure. On it are concentrated the hopes of peace for Europe and the world; and we shall arouse infinite resentment if these hopes are disappointed."

In spite of everything the result hung fire. Snowden declared impatiently that he did not propose to

the League was shortly to take place at Geneva, and neither of the committees at The Hague had made a single step forward.

At the moment of what looked like blank stagnation Stresemann intervened. Upon his suggestion the leaders of the six delegations met together, and he laid before them his view of the collective questions on which the conference turned. Something of his passionate emotion must have stirred the delegates, for although the text of his address was never made public, it was observable on the following day that the conference had emerged from its deadlock. "Good News from The Hague" ran the exultant headlines in the Press; and events suddenly began to move at headlong speed. The sitting of 28th August was prolonged until the late evening; the darkness round the Binnenhof was heavy with destiny. The journalists had put up a sort of open-air encampment in front of the hotel and stared eagerly up at the brightly lighted windows. One felt as though these were not the representatives of world opinion awaiting one of the most far-reaching events in the history of the last few years, but a pack of boys who had settled down to play Red Indians, when a fire of newspapers suddenly blazed up to the sky to the accompaniment of a rousing chorus. "The ice is broken," shouted Wirth to this uproarious crowd as he left the Binnenhof with Stresemann about ten o'clock. The Allied representatives continued to sit.

Long after midnight the telephone bell awoke Stresemann from his sleep. The German delegation was summoned to the conclusion of the negotiations. The Ministers hurriedly made ready for the journey.

Stresemann's doctor, however, forbade him to get up; and indeed he felt himself unequal to the night journey from Scheveningen to The Hague and the long meeting that would follow. Moreover, agreement had already been reached on the main question, as the result of a few sacrifices and some trifling abatements of claim. At the concluding official meeting of the political committee which took place on the following day Henderson recorded the result in language that intentionally admitted of no misconception: "By 30th June, 1930, at the latest, no foreign soldier shall be on German soil."

"The liquidation of the war was complete." The martyrdom of waiting was at an end. A new page was turned over in the book of history. Gustav Stresemann's work was done.

XVI

THE END

In September, when Stresemann mounted the tribune in the Hall of the Reformation, a faint thrill of horror swept over his audience. There stood a man marked by fate—a man in the shadow of death. His clothes hung loosely round his shrunken form, and in the drawn face two empty hollows revealed eyes from which the light had almost gone. The air in the room stood still. His breathing was so laboured that his hurried gasps often drowned his words. The sweat poured in streams from his forehead, and, in the glaring light, could be seen trickling down the hollows in his loosened skin. From time to time he grasped the balustrade of the tribune—to keep himself from falling. The frantic hammering of his heart was almost audible, engulfing, as it were, the connections of his sentences in an uprush of blood. The embodiment of death stood yonder on the tribune, and the assemblage bowed involuntarily before its dreadful majesty.

The words that this deathly figure spoke in the silence of that stifling hall were the confession of his faith in a new and better life. He who had so nearly passed from it, pointed the way into the future, spoke of a morrow which everyone knew that he would never see. It had been expected that, standing as he did upon the threshold of death, he would cast his eyes backward and give a last survey of the way which he had

come. But Gustav Stresemann fixed those vacant eyes, that recalled the windows of a burnt-out house, upon the distance; and as he broke away from the manuscript that held him to an exposition of the events at The Hague, the problem of the Saar, and the question of minorities, a vision of the future passed into his gaze.

He spoke of the conception of a United States of Europe, which Briand had flung out in debate; of the evolution of Europe which, grotesquely enough, was proceeding backwards instead of forwards; of the frontier barriers that in a world of diminishing distances had been so insanely multiplied; and of the, as yet, unfulfilled attempts to liquidate the problems left behind by the war. His words implied an earnest warning to the League of Nations, except that he framed his reproaches in far more cautious and guarded language than Müller had used a year before. His own disappointment at all the opportunities missed, and all the work undone, found expression in his warning that if the League did not show sufficient energy, the nations of the world would get the impression that only direct and individual negotiations between the Governments concerned could produce results, and the great conception of solidarity and co-operation within the League would remain ineffective. He even expressed some doubt—in rather veiled language—whether the progress made in the last few years towards international agreement had been due either directly or indirectly to the League of Nations. He too, like Müller, was haunted by the probability that the League would have to pass through a crisis of mistrust, under which a structure not yet firmly

rooted in the national life of the world might very likely collapse. Rising, then, above the actual questions of the present, he addressed himself to what was, for him, the foundation of the future, the essential condition of peace; the education of the younger generation in the new ideals of humanity.

Once more that mighty voice burst forth from the straining chest and hammered home the sentences with all the solemnity of a testament and a farewell. A few days before, Briand had spoken from the same tribune of the crime of corrupting youth by training it for war. But Stresemann saw that the causes of the trouble lay much deeper, and indeed at the very foundations of the spiritual structure of the world. He spoke of the failure of ideals, in an attempt to appeal to the spirit of self-sacrifice. "We may be certain, and we should be glad, that heroism, the renunciation of life for a great ideal, will never die out among the nations. But I think it well to remind those who live on the memories of the youthful heroisms of the past, that the technical wars of the future will, apart from anything else, give little scope for personal heroism. But I fancy that the victories of mankind over nature will offer ample opportunities for heroism and even for the sacrifice of life for great ideals, and that it is in this vast sphere of activity, in which the eternal riddle of the relation of mankind to the universe may be brought a little nearer a solution, that the greatest services to humanity will be rendered."

The godlessness of the youth of to-day, the vacuity of life without great dominant ideals, and the consequent resort to ideals that are no longer valid for our age, the feverish attempt to adapt stale symbols of

greatness and sublimity to an epoch that uses quite a different scale of values—these were questions that had long engaged his interest.

A few months before the meeting at Geneva, in a long conversation with one of the officials of the League, he had developed his ideas on the subject. He spoke of the discrepancy between the potent modern instruments of suggestion, and the absence of any attempt to mould the youth of the nation to the tendencies of the new age. He spoke of the tremendous power of the present informative agencies, the Press, the Cinema, and the Wireless, which enable the younger generation to be far more deeply influenced than was ever possible before. He listened with much interest to his companion's account of the attempts made under the auspices of the League to exploit these forces, which had been defeated, partly by the natural caution of the new industries, partly by the diffidence of the influential intellectuals, and most of all by the indifference of Governments. "Such indifference is so wrong and so short-sighted," he burst out. "If we really want to make a policy succeed, we must begin at the very beginning and train the younger generation for peace. They now live in a tumult of impressions that assail them from every side, overwhelmed by the material data that pour in upon their consciousness, while their insight and their judgment are quite undeveloped. Our age has in fact outstripped its power of perception; a new world-order is coming into existence, but we have no formulas in which we can make it intelligible to youth. We should have begun by presenting and expounding the past. History is still taught in the schools as it used to

be in an age that was dominated by quite other points of view. What is constructive, universal and truly enduring in history, should be put before the young people of to-day; they should not be bemused with partial and agreeably coloured sketches of the life of a single section of society. We need, in the first place, a history-book purged of the old poison. Slander of another nation does not constitute a glorification of one's own. We have no need to establish our national greatness by such methods. We cannot make new history so long as the present generation is provided with past history in so mangled and falsified a guise." He spoke in quick abrupt sentences, trusting more than ever to the shorthand of his argument, as though he wanted to utter as quickly as he could all the thoughts that raced through his brain.

"Do you know what we want?" he asked suddenly, breaking in upon an account of the efforts that had been made towards spiritual disarmament. "We need a kind of Who's Who of great men. We know too little of men in other lands who have contributed to the common heritage of humanity. We statesmen have been occupied until now in disposing of the war, we had no time to construct a peace. As soon as I have finished my political work, as soon as I can get my elbow-room again, I shall devote myself to these questions."

Finished? His work was indeed finished, but the end of it was far other than he had imagined.

He was now to suffer the heaviest blow of the short remainder of his life. He thought that the news of the evacuation would have been received with gratitude for his services, and taken as a justification of his policy

and an endorsement of his exertions. He hoped for some recognition of his success in ridding the country of foreign troops, some expression of thanks for his long labours. He who had so quickly marked the recent turn of events in Germany and followed it with such anxiety, was quite mistaken in his estimate of the general feeling in the country. Two incidents that occurred during those days at Geneva recalled him to a consciousness of the reality.

After the struggle at The Hague, the bitterness of which few had realised, he awaited the reply from home with a joyous expectation that preserved him from the final collapse. And the reply came; first in a speech by the Leader of his own party, Scholz, at Königsberg, which was nothing more nor less than an attack on his whole policy. As he read it, a quiver went through his emaciated body. His anger burst forth with all the old violence, and his family stood in agony at his rage, which for him meant suicide. "We have heard a great deal about stabs in the back," he muttered; "if this isn't a stab in the back, I don't know what is." He was now utterly at odds with his party. He had forgiven much; he had overlooked many a disloyalty and healed many a breach. But he was now more quickly and more easily wounded than before, and Scholz's attack came at a decisive moment that preceded a parting of the ways. "The whole People's Party is now meaningless," he said in the first moments of excitement, "they will soon be crushed between the parties of the Left and of the Right. We must create a strong central party if the German conception of the State is not to be destroyed."

He had for a long while deceived himself with this

idea. He had once hoped to be able to combine with the more reasonable elements of the Right, but the attitude of Hugenberg's independent group had so disgusted him that he turned towards the Left, and attempted a coalition with the Democratic Party. He discussed the matter frequently with Koch-Weser, who had for the first time become a member of the German delegation. His relations with the leader of the Democrats had been strained for some years, a state of affairs which was due to many causes, both material and personal. Close conjunction with the Democrats gave rise to friction; technical party reasons and election considerations made it tactically essential to draw aloof. But since he had grown more convinced of the necessity for the formation of a moderate Central Block, subject to the detachment of certain elements of the Right, the differences that separated him from Koch-Weser gradually disappeared. Their sojourn at Geneva gave them the opportunity for a long conversation. "The whole German party system is false. With the exception of Social Democracy, which represents a definite stratum of society, it has ceased to be an expression of the popular will. It arose from the upheaval of revolution, and under the pressure of disaster, and we are now confronted by hardened blocks of lava. In what party can the living spirit take refuge?" asked Stresemann. "We need a vital central party—a party that will awaken a response in the younger generation, not a party of embittered candidates for office and disgruntled petitioners for a position," he added with a laugh. And he found that Koch-Weser shared his fear of stagnation, of an airtight segregation of

parties, and of the confusion of individual interests that obscured the important issues. The idea of founding a new party was more and more constantly in his mind. "The great test will now come," he said at the conclusion of his last talk with Koch-Weser; "for a clear decision will be taken between those who are labouring to preserve the State and those whose aim is its destruction: it will be a case of—'Who is not with me is against me,'" he concluded with the emphasis born of much meditation.

But there were too many questions to be settled at Geneva to leave time for a discussion of the details of the new party which both men had in mind. He accordingly asked Koch-Weser to come and see him at Vitznau, where he proposed to go for a short rest after his business at Geneva was over.

His activities at Geneva had worn him out. Everything was so difficult for him: in his exhausted state he saw himself beset by a hundred dreadful obstacles unknown to people in good health. In this struggle with the petty difficulties of life he often felt like Gulliver among the giants. Every stair that he had to go up seemed like a mountain climb, his limbs felt like lead, every step involved the most terrible exertion, and even the act of breathing was a labour that he could scarcely compass. When, on one occasion, he tried to walk a short distance from the Hotel Victoria to the Metropole, he made for the first bench that he could see and sank into it exhausted. There he was found by a journalist, looking at the sunset sky, with his hands crossed on the crook of his stick. He looked so utterly broken that the other stopped and stammered out some sympathetic inquiry.

"I wanted to see the sun set over the lake of Geneva, one hardly ever gets the opportunity," said Stresemann mendaciously; and his lips were blue. Indeed it was obvious how little strength was left in him. He still maintained the appearance of life, as though an admission of weakness were capitulation. And even this struggle for that pitiable appearance grew more arduous.

He was much beset during those days in Geneva. The outlook in foreign politics was far from satisfactory. He would gladly have settled the question of the Saar, so as to remove the last debris of the war. His own weakness, and perhaps, too, his fear of what might happen in the future, urged him to haste. But Briand wanted the matter first discussed by the experts. Stresemann had hoped for a lengthy interview with Briand, but there was a feeling of estrangement in the air, or at least he thought there was.

The so-called "European Breakfast" removed this impression. Briand greeted him with all the old cordiality. "As soon as he caught sight of me," said Stresemann, "he came up with outstretched arms and asked me at once whether I had any scheme for European federation. I had not yet thought about it very much, as I believed that Briand would himself produce proposals. He asked me to work something out, saying that he had so much confidence in me; as though such a scheme could be produced in a moment by a conjuring trick." There was a ring of pride in his voice as he spoke.

When he was asked his opinion by Briand, he, who was always so ready to take fire at a great idea, proved more critical, diffident and pessimistic than

he had ever been before. Not that he would have neglected the conception of a European Federation, for, as he observed in his speech to the Plenary Assembly of the League, he did not share the fundamental scepticism of the *a priori* pessimists and did not regard a combination of European States as essentially impossible, but the formulation of the idea seemed to him open to attack. "Briand cannot but fail if he tries to establish from without this conception of European unity, instead of building it up from within. How is the idea of Europe to be defined? Where does it begin and where does it end? Is it to include England? All these are abstractions. One cannot force the living reality on to the Procrustes bed of a definition. In my view Briand has attacked the problem from the wrong side. He should have started from the one inevitable manifestation of European unity, I mean industry. The close co-operation of a few European States might well give rise to such a conception, and other countries would soon attach themselves to so irresistible a development. Such an industrial combination would of course be confronted by many obstacles and come up against many opposing interests, but it is obviously the only escape from the chaotic and impossible industrial relations of to-day—from the artificial segregation by customs-barriers of forces that are striving to combine." He pictured to himself a sort of European Zollverein which he regarded as no less feasible than the unification of the German Empire or of Italy.

But these were merely tentative ideas, for it was Briand's question that first set his mind to work. His first reaction was the fear of an artificial structure

unsupported by realities. "So many promises have been made to the world and so few of them have been kept; we need facts, not organisation."

. . . .

At last the weary days in Geneva came to a close. The glassy pall of heat that lay upon the city was almost more than he could bear. The Hall of the Reformation was like an overheated cauldron, and the prolonged sittings were agony to a man in his condition. Moreover, there was a much more roomy building in the city—the Bâtiment Électoral—which would have been a much more dignified setting for the Assembly. His last conflict was with the Geneva bureaucracy, from whom he extorted the promise that the plenary meeting of the League should thereafter be held in the Electoral Building. "Next year," he said, "we shall be able to breathe in Geneva."

Next year!

He still clung to a hope that was not yet quite extinct.

"If I come back next year," he said to an acquaintance who had rented a villa in the neighbourhood of Geneva, "you must find something like this for me; I can't stand any more of this hotel life."

In the first few days at Vitznau the flame of his vitality seemed to flicker up for the last time. When Koch-Weser visited him, as had been agreed, after the meeting of the League was over, he found him amazingly alert in mind. The interview that at the urgent request of the doctor was only to last half an hour was extended to more than two hours. With all his old inexhaustible vivacity, with all his instant grasp of possibilities, Stresemann enlarged upon the

ideas and aims that had of late so constantly engaged his thoughts. He weighed the necessity of creating a public opinion for a new party system against the inevitable resistance of the rigid party formations. He pondered on the prospects of a conjunction between the Democrats, together with a large part of the People's Party, and the living forces of youth; in response to which Koch-Weser expressed the view that the great mass of the younger generation could best be reached through the Order of Young Germans. He talked about Arthur Mahraun, and about the foundation of the Order, which, according to Mahraun, was very fairly representative of Young Germany, and finally proposed a meeting with Mahraun after Stresemann's return to Berlin. Stresemann kept coming back to his main point. "We must do all we can to fight the forces of destruction and the indifference of the middle class. We must arouse a belief in the sanctity of the State; and we must make the individual realise his identity with the State." Out of the living flow of that interview one phrase remained. "The dividing line," he said, "between our party and the rest must be our 'sense of the State.'" But fear took him by the throat as he wondered whether he would have the strength to win the masses over to his side, and whether time would be given him to save his country from disaster.

The cleavage between himself and his countrymen was brought mercilessly home to him in those days. Hugenberg's campaign against his policy had reached its climax of bitterness and now found expression in a demand for an appeal to the people against the Young Plan. The feeling against the representatives of the

policy of agreement had become so intense that it culminated in a grotesque outcry for the penalising of those responsible. The news was a stunning blow to Stresemann. Demands for impeachment and cries of "Treason" were understandable enough at the outset of a policy that had yet to make its way; but they were hardly conceivable at this stage when the issue of six years of foreign politics had so amply justified his aims.

His hands with their swollen veins trembled as he held the newspaper. He stared fixedly at what he had just read as though he were trying to extract some other meaning from the letters that danced before his eyes.

This went beyond the limits of political animosity; the distorted hatred that leapt from the lines before him amounted to an annihilation of the work of his political career. "It is madness," he cried; and after a while he added as though to himself: "Then I have lived in vain." Had his achievement so little convincing force, had his ideas no spark of resilience, that such madness should be possible? His self-questioning quite wore him out. Where was the fault—in him, or in others? Long reflection revealed a partial explanation. "I blame," he said, "all those half-hearted friends of mine who kept themselves so fastidiously aloof. I did my utmost, but I cannot make interest for myself, I could not go on talking about my deeds and my successes. I could not sing the praises of my own policy. But others should have done so—not out of regard for me but because my aims were the same as theirs. But in the dark jungle of the German Press the voice of criticism is

heard more clearly than the voice of praise. It is Germany's misfortune that slander speaks so loudly in this country, and reason in a whisper."

Shadow upon shadow gathered round Gustav Stresemann's end. He watched the downfall of much that he had built up. He was constantly wondering how far the German masses would let themselves be carried away by demagogues. In Germany, he reflected, great upheavals involved a movement of the masses; the herd instinct had still much power over his countrymen. What would Germany's future be like?

Only one thing remained to him in the days of his passing, only one thing held fast and sustained him in his physical suffering and his mental torment: the consciousness of his achievement. "What will remain of my work when I am dead?" he said in a last conversation with a friend. "Napoleon once said that it was only the work a man leaves behind him that makes him great. How far will that apply to me? Someone once compared me with Bismarck; I remember it made me angry at the time, but now I am suffering from megalomania, I suppose, as I have ceased to be shocked at the suggestion," he said with a faint and half-apologetic smile. "I daresay Bismarck could have done no more after so utter a defeat, and in such a state of helplessness. I think so much will remain: that Germany won back her position without the instrument of force, and—what is even more important—that peace and understanding brought just such victories as war and battle. And this goes perhaps a step beyond the policy of Bismarck. Still, he lived in another age, and the means at his disposal were not ours; the world in which we found our-

selves had quite another aspect," he added, as though to soften the boldness of the comparison. His faith in his own achievement, his conviction that his policy had been right, was his sole and only comfort. It had to fortify him against the feeling that he had let his own personal life slip by, worn himself out in public work, and received but little thanks for all the strength, ability, and earnest and unselfish loyalty that he had sacrificed in the service of his country.

Such, too, had to be his comfort on the last bitter day—the last day of his life. When he returned to Berlin it was in fact his own party that contemplated withdrawing from the Government, declined to ratify the Young Plan, and endangered the results of the Hague Conference. He saw himself more estranged from it than ever, and he watched the waverers going over to the enemy. The success or failure of the Government's foreign policy depended on this recalcitrant group. He saw his life's work, the liberation of German soil, menaced by their attitude. Once again he flung himself into the breach; once again he collected all his strength. But victory was more difficult than usual. For hours the negotiations with his party went on; for hours he strove to avert the break-up of the great coalition. Again and again he flung himself against the wall of indifference, of hostility almost, that seemed to hem him in. He talked, explained, implored; and at last he managed to overpersuade, if not to convince, the opposition. Once more the People's Party gave way, though with more reluctance and ill-will than ever before. He came home exhausted. His delight at his victory disguised his weakness. "Well, I've managed it," he

said, "but it was hard—very hard!" His satisfaction was indeed clouded by the prospect of all the difficulties that he still would have to face. But he was too weary to torment himself with anxiety. He summoned all his strength for a last pitiful smile when his wife came into the room. "I am all right," he said, "perfectly all right." He stretched himself out in bed with an almost agonised desire for rest and sleep.

Out of the darkness of the night the death struggle came upon him, but a kindly fate spared him the consciousness of the final horror.

On the face of the dead man lay the reflection of his last smile.

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Acc. No.	15824
Class No.	G. 10.
Book No.	1779

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW